ARGOSY ALL-STORY WEEKLY

Complete in This Number

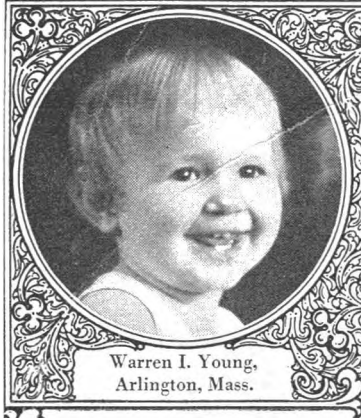
The Gold-Dust Rajah

by Eleanor Gates

Author of

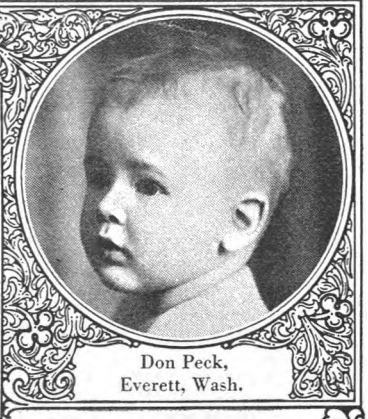
"The Poor Little Rich Girl"

10¢ PER COPY — APRIL 4 — BY THE YEAR $4.00



Warren I. Young,
Arlington, Mass.

William L. McCord,
Toledo, Ohio.



Don Peck,
Everett, Wash.

Mellin's Food

Mellin's Food and milk will enable your baby to have the healthy and robust appearance so typical of all Mellin's Food babies.

Write to us for a Free Trial Bottle of Mellin's Food and a copy of our book, "The Care and Feeding of Infants".

Mellin's Food Co., 177 State St., Boston, Mass.

Dorothy J. Johnson,
Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Barbara C. Marsha,
Peru, New York.

Elizabeth H. Kaufholz,
Eagleville, Pa.

Derby CORD Tires

Extra Thick Full Oversize

$1.00 Down
Balance on Easy Payments

Yes, only $1.00 down now brings you the genuine Derby Cord tire on approval. This is your opportunity to equip your car with *brand new, first grade* genuine Derby Cord tires at lower than list prices of advertised brands and on small monthly payments without feeling the expense. Read:

Guaranteed 10000 Miles

The genuine Derby Cord tire is guaranteed to be absolutely first quality. If any defects should develop, we will replace or repair the defective tire on the basis of 10,000 miles of service. The Derby tire is branded with the Straus & Schram name and backed by Straus & Schram ironclad guarantee. We know how the Derby is made and we say — no matter what brand or what price, there is no better tire than the Derby. The Straus & Schram Derby Oversize Cord is an **EXTRA HEAVY, EXTRA THICK, FULL OVERSIZE** cord tire. Compare it for size and weight with ANY other well known makes sold for cash at higher prices.

Derby Special Non-Skid Tread

Our exclusive Derby Non-Skid Tread is extra thick and semi-flat, providing nearly twice as much wearing surface as the ordinary rounded or flat tread. So tough that it will show almost no wear after thousands of miles of service. The tread is scientifically designed to give the highest non-skid efficiency. The friction surface is of unadulterated new rubber, carefully vulcanized to prevent separation. The Derby Cord tire has that handsome all black color now preferred by motorists. **Terms as low as—**

Our Prices (*6 Months to Pay*)

Clincher Cord Tires.

			Number
30 x 3	Standard Size	$ 9.95	Z8234A
30 x 3½	" "	11.95	Z8235A
30 x 3½	Oversize	13.80	Z8236A
30x3½	**Giant Oversize**	**14.85**	**Z8238A**

Note: We particularly recommend our **30 x 3½ Giant Oversize** Derby Cord — a bigger, better, stronger tire. Gives greater comfort and greater mileage and the price is only a few cents more per month! It's the best investment in the end.

Straight Side Cord Tires.

			Number
30 x 3½	Oversize	$14.80	Z8237A
31 x 4	Giant Oversize	21.90	Z8239A
32 x 4	" "	22.95	Z8240A
33 x 4	" "	24.25	Z8241A

Inner Tubes

Order a New Tube With Your Tire.

We offer gray inner tubes, extra strong, especially built to eliminate leaks. Also extra heavy red inner tubes which are 50% heavier than standard weight tubes and give extra service. All tubes made of best materials, thoroughly tested. *Experts will tell you it's best to have a new tube with a new tire.*

Size	Gray Tubes		Red Tubes	
30 x 3	$1.65	No. Z8242A	$2.40	No. Z8247A
30 x 3½	1.85	No. Z8243A	2.55	No. Z8248A
31 x 4	2.30	No. Z8244A	3.15	No. Z8249A
32 x 4	2.40	No. Z8245A	3.30	No. Z8250A
33 x 4	2.65	No. Z8246A	3.50	No. Z8251A

Straus & Schram
Dept. T2274, Chicago, Ill.

$1.50 a Month

Yes, on this wonderful new plan, you can pay for your tires on easy monthly terms as low as $1.50 a month—6 months to pay. You need not wait until you have the cash. Get as many tires as you'll need for your car this entire season and pay while using them — only $1.00 down, balance in six equal monthly payments. You won't feel the expense on this monthly payment plan and you'll be free from tire trouble all year.

On Approval

Send Coupon

Only $1.00 with coupon brings the Genuine Derby tire to you on approval at our risk. If not satisfied after examination, send it back and we will refund your dollar plus transportation charges. Send the coupon today while these lowest rock-bottom prices last.

STRAUS & SCHRAM, Dept. T2274, Chicago, Ill.

I enclose $1.00. Send me *on money-back approval* and subject to your 10,000-mile guarantee the genuine Derby Cord Tires and Tubes I have ordered below. If I am not satisfied, I may return the tires at once and you will refund my $1.00 including transportation charges. If satisfied, I will pay the balance of the total amount of my order in six equal monthly payments.

You can buy 1, 2 or 3 tires and 1, 2 or 3 tubes up to $50.00 worth for $1.00 down on this coupon, balance in six equal monthly payments.

.....How Many *Derby Cord Tires. No.*.....Fill in Tire No. *Total Price*.....

.....How Many *Tubes. No.*.....Fill in Tube No. *Total Price*.....

Name.....

Address.....

Shipping Point.....

Post Office.....*State*.....

In answering this advertisement it is desirable that you mention this magazine.

ARGOSY-ALLSTORY WEEKLY

VOL. CLXVII — CONTENTS FOR APRIL 4, 1925 — NUMBER 6

The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted without the publishers' permission.

ONE COMPLETE NOVELETTE

The Gold-Dust Rajah . . . . . Eleanor Gates 801

THREE CONTINUED STORIES

In the Event of Death . . . . . Laurie York Erskine . . . 849
A Four-Part Story — Part Two

The Radio Beasts . . . . . Ralph Milne Farley . . . 885
A Four-Part Story — Part Three

Señor Jingle Bells . . . . . Max Brand 919
A Five-Part Story — Part Five

FIVE SHORT STORIES

Page Romeo ! . . . . . Beatrice Ashton Vandegrift . 877

Two Step Lou and the Professor . . Paul Deresco Augsburg . . 908

World-Beaters . . . . . Thomas Thursday 939

The Tawny Peril . . . . . William Byron Mowery . . 949

The Unseen Face . . . . . Joseph Gollomb 953

POETRY

Reverie . . . . . Mary Adams Stearns 918

An Honest Man . . . . . Frank Lintaber 938

Orchard Petals . . . . . Mary Carolyn Davies 952

Still another great literary reward for our readers ! The generous author of "Nothing But Money" offers a further rich fictional prize. There are millions in it !

SOFT MONEY : : : By Fred MacIsaac

First of three opulent installments next week.

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, N. Y., and LENNOX HOUSE, NORFOLK STREET, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.2

FRANK A. MUNSEY, President — RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary — CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer

Single copies, 10 cents. By the year, $4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba ; $6.00 to Canada, and $7.00 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered

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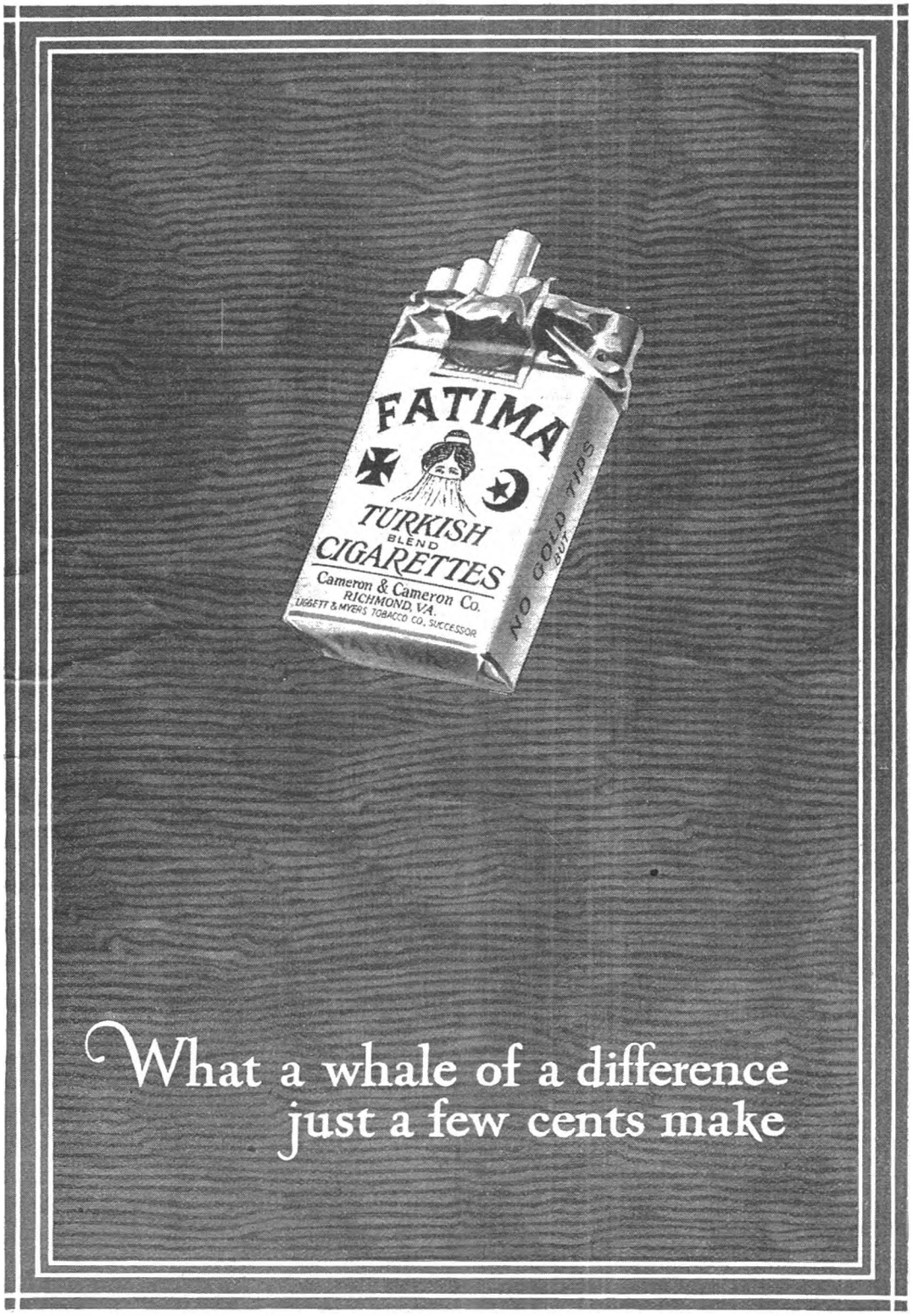

FATIMA
TURKISH
BLEND
CIGARETTES
Cameron & Cameron Co.
RICHMOND, VA.
LIGGETT & MYERS TOBACCO CO. SUCCESSOR
NO COLD TIPS
BUT
What a whale of a difference
just a few cents make

Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department

is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needfuls for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

Classified Advertising Rates in the Munsey Magazines:

	Line Rate	
Munsey's Magazine	$1.50	Combination Line Rate $5.00 less 2% cash discount
Argosy-Allstory Weekly	2.50	
Flynn's	1.00	

Minimum space four lines.

May 9th Argosy-Allstory Forms Close April 11th.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

SALESMAN—$60.00 to $90.00 week steady. Spare time or full. Sell men's all wool suits direct from factory to consumer. Real $10.00 values—$23.75. Boys' suits, $9.75. Sales easy because of wonderful values. Commission in advance. We deliver and collect. Complete sample outfit—free. Write today. Get full particulars of this wonderful money making opportunity. Dept. BB-11, John G. Longworth & Sons, 1301-11 W. Congress Street, Chicago.

AGENTS $45 A WEEK—Our full line of Guaranteed Hosiery for men, women, children is the finest you ever saw. Must satisfy customer or new hose free. Our new shades of finest silk hose lead them all. Write for samples. PARKER MFG. CO., Sample 1306, Dayton, Ohio.

$5.00 HOUR TAKING ORDERS JACKSON "$2.95 COMBINATION COAT" Demonstrating coat, selling outfit FREE. Jackson Raincoat, Dept. L, 720 Roosevelt, Chicago.

Representative Wanted for this territory. Wonderful value Men's, Women's, Children's shoes direct, saving Wearer over 40%. 72 styles. Experience unnecessary. Samples supplied. Permanent income. Write today. TANNERS SHOE MFG. CO., 4-32 C St., Boston, Mass.

AGENTS: A Brand New Hosiery Proposition for men, women and children. Must wear 12 months or replaced free. All styles, colors and finest silk hose. You can sell at less than store prices. Write for samples. THOMAS MANUFACTURING COMPANY, Class 607, Dayton, Ohio.

AGENTS—$60—$200 A WEEK. Guaranteed Genuine Gold Letters for store windows. Anyone can put them on. Free samples. Liberal offer to general agents. METALLIC LETTER CO., 427A N. Clark St., Chicago.

$5.00 HOUR TAKING ORDERS "DIXIE $2.95 COMBINATION COAT" Demonstrating coat, selling outfit FREE. Dixie Raincoat, Dept. O, 720 Roosevelt, Chicago.

I PAY MEN $100 A WEEK, selling our fine made-to-measure, all-wool suits—Direct to wearer—All ONE price, $31.50. Biggest Values. Highest Commissions in advance. We deliver and collect. 6x9 swatch samples furnished. Write today. State selling experience fully. W. Z. Gibson Inc., 161 W. Harrison St., Dept. D-409, Chicago.

BIG MONEY Selling New Household Cleaning Set. Washes and dries windows. Sweeps, scrubs, mops. All complete only $2.95. Over half profit. Write Harper Brush Works, 329 Grimes Street, Fairfield, Iowa.

Take orders $9.50 WEARWELL Guaranteed Suits and Topcoats Neat in appearance and serviceable. Your commission $3.00. Selling outfit FREE. Prompt delivery. Territory open. Consumers-Wearwell Mfg. Co., 720M Roosevelt, Chicago.

WE START YOU WITHOUT A DOLLAR. Soaps, Extracts, Perfumes, Toilet Goods. Experience unnecessary. CARNATION CO., Dept. 200, St. Louis, Mo.

LIVE AGENTS MAKE $10 DAY SELLING EUREKA STRAINER and Splash Preventer for every water faucet. Takes on sight. Widely advertised and known. Get details today. A. D. Seed Filter & Mfg. Company, 73 Franklin, New York.

Wanted—Several hundred men to represent manufacturer taking orders for shirts, raincoats, topcoats, sweaters, overalls. Big commissions daily. Send for free sample outfit. NORTHERN SALES CO., 208 Northern Office Building, Chicago.

AGENTS—WRITE FOR FREE SAMPLES. Sell Madison "Better-Made" shirts for large manufacturer direct to wearer. No capital or experience required. Many earn $100 weekly and bonus. MADISON MFRS., 503 Broadway, New York.

BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. EVERY OWNER BUYS GOLD INITIALS for his auto. You charge $1.50, make $1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. AMERICAN MONOGRAM CO., Dept. 54, East Orange, N. J.

MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FOR SALE

20 ACRES OR MORE OF OUR BEST LAND IN MICHIGAN, $20 per acre. 25c per acre down; balance your own terms. 52 page book free. Swigart Land Co., Y-1245, First National Bank Bldg., Chicago.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

EASY TO SELL GROCERIES, PAINTS, AUTOMOBILE OILS—FROM SAMPLES TO CONSUMERS IN TOWN AND COUNTRY. OUR PRICES MEET ALL COMPETITION. No capital or experience necessary. Profitable, steady or part time work. Commission advanced. Satisfaction guaranteed; 35 years in business. Reference any bank or express company. WRITE FOR PARTICULARS. LOVERIN & BROWNE COMPANY, Wholesale Grocers, 1735 SO. STATE STREET, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AGENTS—Send for sworn proof of $5 to $15 daily. Introducing New Style Guaranteed Hosiery. 57 styles, 37 colors. No capital or experience required. Just write orders, we deliver and collect. YOUR PAY DAILY, also monthly bonus. Free auto offer besides. Complete outfit furnished. All colors, grades including silks. Macochee Textile Co., Sta. 2708, Cincinnati, O.

AGENTS—Distributors, Salesmen, Everywhere, earn $60—$100 weekly with this new auto accessory; sells on sight to all auto owners, garages, service stations, dealers, and to sub-agents; get territorial right; free folder tells how. STANDARD SPECIALTIES CO., Dept. G, Toledo, Ohio.

I Make The Best Chocolate Bars, Mints and Chewing Gum. Be my agent. Everybody will buy from you. Write today. Free samples. MILTON GORDON, 673 Jackson St., Cincinnati, O.

Make Money in Your Spare Time—Easy to make $1 to $2 an hour by following our instructions. No Money or Experience Necessary. Write TODAY for particulars. Costs nothing to investigate. American Products Co., 2423 American Bldg., Cincinnati, O.

HAVE YOU SEEN the New BeeGee Line—get our 1925 catalogue and stop worrying about what to sell. You'll be satisfied with what you make. B. & G. Rubber Co., Dept 762, Pittsburgh, Pa.

AGENTS—Be independent, make big profit with our soap, toilet articles and household necessities. Get free sample case offer. HO-RO-CO, 2718 Dodier, St. Louis, Mo.

WE START YOU in business, furnishing everything. Men and women, $30.00 to $100.00 weekly operating our "New System Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Opportunity lifetime; booklet free. W. Hillyer Ragsdale, Drawer 93, East Orange, N. J.

66 MILES ON 1 GALLON—Wonderful Vapor Humidifier, 1 free to introduce. Big cash profits showing to auto owners. All makes. Spare or full time agency or be confidential booster. Make fine income. CRITCHLOW, AA-A-39, Wheaton, Ill.

Sell Guaranteed Shirts, factory to wearer. Big commission paid in advance. We deliver. Make $5.00-$20.00 daily. Write for our "Wonder Sales Outfit." CURTIS SHIRT CO., 508 So. Wells, Dept. 10, Chicago.

Lightning strange battery compound. Charges discharged batteries instantly. Eliminates old method entirely. Gallon free to agents. LIGHTNING CO., St. Paul, Minn.

$96 A WEEK GUARANTEED HOSIERY OFFER. We furnish Essex closed car to representatives. New plan doubles your earnings. Write quick for offer. The Frank B. Jennings Co., Dept. A-217, Dayton, Ohio.

DO YOU WANT AGENTS AND SALESMEN TO SELL your merchandise? Men and women who are educated in personal salesmanship and know the house-to-house, office, and store canvassing proposition. These advertisers are getting them year in and year out, and there are thousands more for you among the 2,000,000 readers of the Munsey Magazines. Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager, Argosy Combination, 280 B'way, New York.

AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS, ETC., are wanted for publication. Good ideas bring big money. Submit MSS., or write Literary Bureau, 110, Hannibal, Mo.

Classified Advertising continued on page 6.

No C.O.D. to Pay

$1.00 down!

Satin Canton

Smartest Spring Style

This beautiful dress of Satin Canton combines the stylish straight lines with the ever popular tunic effect. Both front and back is enlivened with three attractive silk rosettes, giving this model a most stunning appearance. Dress is made with short sleeves and finished at waist line with narrow belt of self material. Send for this Satin Canton dress on our recommendation—try it on in your own home, and we are sure you will admit that this becoming style is one of the prettiest models you have ever seen and a real bargain besides. Comes in black or navy. Sizes 34 to 44, or Misses' 16 to 20.

Order by No. S-39. Terms: $1.00 with coupon. Only $3.20 a month. Total Price, only $19.95.

6 Months to Pay

Do you realize how easy it is to have a new dress on our monthly payment plan? Just think! Only $3.20 a month for 6 months. Surely you can save that small amount out of household expenses as thousands and thousands of well dressed women do and never miss the money. Send only $1.00 now with the understanding that if this dress does not satisfy you in every way you can send it back and your $1.00 will be promptly refunded. You take no risk.

You Don't Risk One Penny

Judge this latest style dress for yourself. Examine the fine materials, the finished workmanship and the popular style. Compare the low price, consider the easy terms. Don't keep the dress unless you are satisfied in every way. You take no risk!

Send Coupon— Your Dollar Back If Not Satisfied!

Send Only $1.00 NOW!

Send for Free Style Book

Elmer Richards Co.

Dept. 2274 **West 35th St., Chicago**

I enclose **$1.** Please open a charge account for me. Send me the Satin Canton Dress No. **S-39.** If I am not delighted with the dress, I can return it and get my $1 back. Otherwise, I will pay **$3.20** a month until I have paid **$19.95** in all.

(Check Color Wanted) ☐ *Black* ☐ *Navy*

Bust..... *Belt*..... *Hip*..... *Length*.....
(Be sure to fill out the above lines)

Name .....

Address .....

P.O...... *State*.....

In answering this advertisement it is desirable that you mention this magazine.

Why BOSTON?

Because it has these superior points

ALL Rubber Oblong Button, holds stockings taut—for trim ankles.

Hook and Eye Cast-off—for convenience.

Slide Adjustment—for fit and service.

No metal parts on face of pad—no wrinkles.

The pad without a pucker.

GEORGE FROST COMPANY, BOSTON, Makers

Velvet Grip Hose Supporters for All the Family

Just 17c

a Day Pays for this Beautiful Chair

Over 1000 other bargains. Furniture, Rugs, Lamps, Silver, China, Blankets, Stoves, etc. **Save big money** at our Factory-to-Family prices. Pay as little as $3 down; up to a year and a half to pay balance. Get all your Furnishings at once—pay as you use. Thousands buying this new way.

Big Catalog FREE

New Spring "Larkin Book of Better Homes." Shows everything for parlor, porch, dining-room, bedroom, kitchen. **Bargain Prices** on famous Symphonola Phonographs. Also Symphonic Pianos, Player-Pianos in genuine Mahogany, Walnut, Fumed Oak. Free trial. Up to 4 years to pay. Satisfaction or money back. Check below article interested in.

☐ **Home Furnishings**
☐ **Pianos or Players**
☐ **Phonographs**

Cut out this adv.—write TO-DAY for FREE Book.

Larkin Co Inc.

Dept. 41, BUFFALO, N. Y.
Peoria, Ill. Chicago, Ill.

Classified Advertising continued from page 4.

HELP WANTED

MEN AND WOMEN WANTED EVERYWHERE to weave rugs, carpet, etc., at home; no previous experience needed. You can equal these earnings: Mrs. Morse $100, Mr. Rozsa $242 monthly. Rush Postal today for FREE LOOM BOOK, telling all about weaving and how to make money with our $9.90 and other wonderful looms. UNION LOOM WORKS, 486 Factory Street, BOONVILLE, N. Y.

ESTABLISH YOURSELF—AT HOME—AS A Photographic Expert. Make $75 a week while learning. Write at once for TEMPORARY offer. INTERNATIONAL STUDIOS, Dept. 1453, 3601 Michigan Ave., Chicago.

HELP WANTED—MALE

EARN $110 TO $250 MONTHLY, EXPENSES PAID AS RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR. Position guaranteed after completion of 3 months' home study course or money refunded. EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITIES. Write for Free Booklet CM-30. STAND. BUSINESS TRAINING INST., Buffalo, N. Y.

DETECTIVE AGENCY—Licensed and Bonded. Opportunities for ambitious men and women. Experience unnecessary. 20 lessons free. CLARKE SYSTEM, Box 239, Providence, R. I.

ALL MEN, WOMEN, BOYS, GIRLS, 17 TO 65, willing to accept Government positions, $117—$250, traveling or stationary. Write MR. OZMENT, 198, St. Louis, Mo., immediately.

MEN wanting forest ranger, railway mail clerk and other government positions, $1500-$2400 year. Write for free particulars. MOKANE, Dept. A-31, Denver, Colo.

EDUCATIONAL

RAILROAD POSTAL CLERKS start $133 month, railroad pass. Send stamps for questions. COLUMBUS INSTITUTE, A-6, Columbus, Ohio.

MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

EXCHANGE PLOTS FOR $$—Photoplay ideas accepted any form; revised, criticized, published, copyrighted, marketed. Advice free. UNIVERSAL SCENARIO CORP., 209 Security Bldg., Santa Monica and Western Ave., Hollywood, Calif.

PATENT ATTORNEYS

PATENTS—Write for FREE Guide Books and "Record of Invention Blank" before disclosing inventions. Send model or sketch and description of invention for Inspection & Instructions free. Terms Reasonable. Prompt Attention. Highest References. Victor J. Evans & Co., 762 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS. If you have an invention write for our Guide Book, "How To Get A Patent." Send model or sketch and description, and we will give our opinion as to its patentable nature. Randolph & Co., 630 F, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS. BOOKLET FREE. Highest references. Best results. Promptness assured. Send drawing or model for examination and opinion as to patentability. Watson E. Coleman, 644 G St., Washington, D. C.

Patents Procured; Trade Marks Registered—A comprehensive, experienced, prompt service for the protection and development of your ideas. Preliminary advice gladly furnished without charge. Booklet of information and form for disclosing idea free on request. Richard B. Owen, 68 Owen Bldg., Washington, D. C., or 41-J Park Row, New York.

PATENTS AND INVENTIONS

INVENTIONS COMMERCIALIZED on cash or royalty basis. Patented or unpatented. In business 24 years. Complete facilities. References. Write ADAM FISHER MFG. CO., 249 Enright, St. Louis, Mo.

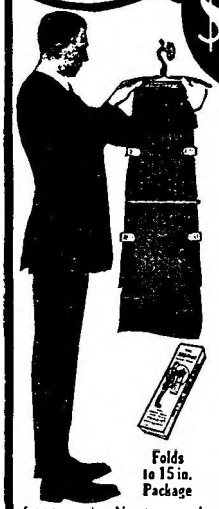
UNDERGROUND TREASURES

UNDERGROUND TREASURES—HOW AND WHERE TO FIND THEM; PARTICULARS FREE. MODEL CO., DEPT. K-61, COMO BLDG., CHICAGO, ILL.

MISCELLANEOUS

YOU read these little advertisements. Perhaps you obtain through them things you want; things you might never have known about if you had not looked here. Did it ever strike you other people would read your message—that they would buy what you have to sell; whether it is a bicycle you no longer need, a patented novelty you desire to push, or maybe your own services? Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager, The Argosy Combination, 280 Broadway, New York.

I made $93 my first week



"Since then I've been earning over $100 every week selling the Stay-Prest Trouser Presser"—says S. L. Patterson of Iowa. Jack Ames made $24.00 in four hours. Randle sold twenty-five the first day. Mary Roberts cleared $10.00 in one evening. You too can make big money by selling this

Wonderful New INVENTION

Stay Prest Trouser Presser

Folds to 15 in. Package

Keeps pants always pressed. Puts in knife edge crease, removes baggy knees and smooths out entire surface. Easy to use—takes only a few seconds. No steam or heat. Saves nap of cloth. Lengthens life of trousers. Durably made of hardwood—lasts years. Finished in black leatherette. All metal parts heavily nickeled. Looks rich. Fits any size trousers. Folds to 15 inch package to fit small handbag. Over 250,000 in use.

BIG CASH PROFITS IN ADVANCE

Your profits in advance. Simply write orders. We ship and collect. Stay-Prest sells quickly—average sale made in 8 minutes. 40% profit. Newest thing out. Big repeater.

FREE—To Men and Women

Special offer enables you to obtain Selling Outfit absolutely free—everything you need to take orders. We guarantee you will make sales. Write for plan and exclusive territory.

The Getgey-Jung Co. D-119 G. & J. Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio

SAVE 60% on Standard Tires

Send No Money!

Here is your opportunity to save 60 per cent on your tire bill. For a limited period only we are offering our regular stock of STANDARD MAKES, GOODYEAR, GOODRICH, FIRESTONE, FISKE, etc., retread tires at 40 cents on the dollar. The Diamond tread as ILLUSTRATED is made of NEW LIVE RUBBER and gives you the mileage.

SPECIAL SALE PRICES

Size	Tire	Tube	Size	Tire	Tube
28x3	$4.95	$1.25	36x4	$8.65	$2.35
30x3	4.95	1.35	32x4½	8.85	2.40
30x3½	5.85	1.40	33x4½	9.00	2.45
32x3½	6.50	1.50	34x4½	9.15	2.50
31x4	7.00	1.60	35x4½	9.26	2.60
32x4	7.50	1.85	36x4½	9.45	2.70
33x4	7.85	2.15	35x5½	9.75	2.80
34x4	8.10	2.25	37x5	9.85	2.90

All Our Tubes are NEW FRESH STOCK AND GUARANTEED FOR ONE YEAR. Shipments made same day order is received. Pay on arrival and if not satisfied return AT OUR EXPENSE. Specify whether straight side or clincher wanted. FIVE PER CENT DISCOUNT when cash accompanies order. DEALER AGENTS WANTED IN EVERY LOCALITY.

Standard Tire & Rubber Co.
3259 S. Morgan St., Chicago, Ill.

YOU SHOULD READ—

MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE

192 *Pages of the Finest Fiction Available at Any Price.*

Twenty-five cents a copy. At all news-stands.

This Man is Sure of His Job

HE saw the handwriting on the wall. Men in his department were being dropped right and left. He might have been the next to go but for a familiar coupon which he saw one day in a magazine. He marked it, and mailed it to Scranton.

Then one day his employer called him in.

"Young man," he said, "I have just received a letter from the International Correspondence Schools telling me you have enrolled and have received a mark of 93 for your first lesson.

"I don't mind saying that this letter has saved your job. I had you on the list of men to be dropped. But I'm going to keep you now. The man who thinks enough of his future to study his job is the kind of a man we want around here."

HOW about you? Are you sitting on the anxious bench wondering if you will be the next to go? Or are you training yourself so that you will not only be sure of your present job but will be ready for the job ahead?

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ARGOSY-ALLSTORY WEEKLY

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The Gold-Dust Rajah

By ELEANOR GATES

Author of "The Poor Little Rich Girl," etc.

A NOVELETTE—COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN WHO UNDERSTOOD DYAKS.

"SIR, the water fights hard against us." It was Goboh, the steersman of Number One *prau* who was complaining—a thickset, well built young Malay, whose straight, heavy, black hair was covered by a brilliantly dyed headcloth of cotton, this stiffened with rice starch, and so tied that it stood out boldly in three peaks. Except for his headdress, which was scarlet, he wore only the usual white calico trousers, coming down to his bare, sandaled feet, for he had taken off his white singlet and it lay over a thwart.

Goboh had spoken in his own tongue. The white man he so respectfully addressed

did not reply in words. Lolling back in that first boat of eight which were making up the wide, mud-yellowed river in a long line, he threw out a careless hand toward that border of the great stream which was the nearer—a border all of low-sweeping branches that reached down like arms toward the fairly swift water, and of trailing vines and creepers, laced and braided.

The native boat, fully twenty-five feet long, but hewn out of a single tree, now turned its lifted and sharply pointed nose toward the jungle on the left, Goboh having sung out a word to the seven half naked men who manned the craft. That word was of warning, for the *prau*, heavily loaded, had its gunwale perilously close to the dun-colored current, and skill was required of the paddlers to turn even slightly across the strong flow into water which was making seaward less swiftly.

Barker was a slight, short man of perhaps thirty, whose face, sunburned and pockmarked, was nearly as dark as the face of his Malay crew. His eyes were dark, too, and even the white of them was streaked. They were quick, keen eyes, which darted about in a nervous, inquiring, suspicious way. Yet Barker seemed to be continually smiling, this because his thin lips, except when he was smoking, were habitually drawn away from over his small, uneven teeth.

As at his silent command the first of the little fleet had veered away from the rapid center of the river to calmer water, one by one the other seven *praus* followed suit. In the front of the second sat a striking figure, heavy, shapeless, voluminously dressed, silent and immovable. This was a woman, veiled to her eyes, which roved constantly from side to side. Why she had been brought along, not even Barker himself knew—except that, as Goboh had stated, she was a holy person, having "made the pilgrimage," and it was certain that if she was one of the expedition, her company, taken with all the other omens—which had been favorable—would ensure the success of the trip.

What the third boat carried, in addition to nine strong paddlers, was designed, not so much to add to the matter of success, as to that of pleasure. For the ostensible, though not actual, freight of the *prau* consisted of a collection of conical baskets in each of which crouched, or perched, a fighting cock. The morning heat was growing; made drowsy by it, as well as by the motion of the craft, the birds were silent.

The next three canoes of the line held no other persons except the members of the crews, being loaded with luggage and provisions, the rice and other sacked edibles, as well as the various bags and suit cases, being well covered and completely hidden by heavy tarpaulin.

The seventh *prau* had a passenger—Mr. Chichester Wray, a stocky gentleman, who, like Barker, was dressed in white, topped by a helmet. But his skin marked him as a stranger to the tropics. As he sat, as quiet and humped over as the fighting cocks themselves, his blue eyes were half closed against the glare of the sun on the river. Resting on his knees and handy to his grasp, were a pair of automatic pistols.

The boat which was the last one of the long line was the only one fitted with a covered cabin. Under this cabin and swaying with the motion of the canoe, sat a young woman, her dress, white and of some thin material, glimmering in the shadow under the graceful ogee, or double-curved roof. A wide hat of palm fibre lay in her lap. Her gray eyes gave close attention to every feature of the scene which changed with every advance of her splendidly made and ornately carved native craft.

As this last *prau* of the eight fell into line closer to the jungle-set shore, there was a sudden sound of scraping, as the overhanging vines and branches came into contact with that curved roof. And instantly, hearing the sound, the man in the boat ahead, taking care not to move too quickly in a boat that was closely trimmed, turned his head to call back.

"Kwong!" he shouted. "You! Steering there! Keep farther out!"

This had already happened, for the steersman of the last *prau*, who was the only Chinese of the expedition, had already swung the boat outward an arm's length, the crew paddling furiously to avoid down hanging greenery just ahead.

"You all right, Marcia?" sang out Wray next.

The girl drew herself forward to answer. "Yes, uncle, thanks," she answered cheerfully. Her oval face was delicate and vividly alive.

"Kwong'll have that cabin roof jerked off if he doesn't look out," Wray went on. "That would give you a nasty spill."

"I can swim," she called back, half laughing.

"You don't want to lose the shade of that pleasant roof, my dear," Wray answered. "And I don't know where you'd find a foot of ground to land on—Kwong, you savvy keep away from shore. Keep out where you are now. Don't risk going over."

Kwong Wing, young, tall for one of his race, thin-bodied, under a loose shirt and wide, black trousers of black calico, had a smooth, unwrinkled face and a pair of black eyes that were as bright and liquid as the eyes of a bird. Though, as the *prau* he had been steering came too closely inshore, he had been forced to squat in the lee of the ogee roof, and cling hard to the gunwale to keep himself from being scraped into the yellow stream, he had uttered not a word of either *pidgin* or Chinese, but, unperturbed, had gone on with his steering, keeping farther out in the river than the other craft of the line.

And from under her roof, Marcia Oldham, as unconcerned as her Celestial steersman, looked out eagerly—at the muddy river; the long string of strange boats, each *prau* with its quota of straining, gleaming, brown backs and regularly moving arms and paddles; at the two walls of jungle that came not only down to, but into the misty level of the stream; at the blinding green of those walls, which seemed to hold them off and keep them out in a sun which was every moment growing hotter—a green that was relieved only here and there by the vivid patches of color made where high-growing orchids, or silvery clusters of ferns, waved droopingly out from tree-forks that were forty or fifty feet above the procession.

She saw few signs of animate life. Now and again a snake-darter emerged from the tangle and lost itself quickly therein once more. At longer intervals what looked to be a ridge of gray-brown soil above the bosom of the great stream shelved gently and softly from sight, as a crocodile slipped under the water. Soon after starting, while the fighting cocks were still noisily challenging one another, a few birds had been seen as well as heard. Now the forest was voiceless except when there sounded the chattering of monkeys, and the swishing of branches as the small animals, excited by the presence of the boats, protested angrily at having their territory invaded.

Wray, whose *prau* was so close in to the unseen bank that the verdure trespassing on the river often combed the head coverings off the black hair of his paddlers, kept watch for the scolding inhabitants of the nearby green retreats. When he caught sight of one, up came a pistol and he took swift aim—when a very babble of wild cries answered the echoing sound of the shot and the rustling of branches became furious.

Now he called back to his niece, twisting his roundish head on his soft-collared neck. "We're going to pick up another white man, Marcia—at the next *kampong*. An ex-China Coast citizen."

Once more she leaned forward. "Indeed?" she returned. "That sounds interesting. Who is it?"

"Don't know," her uncle answered carelessly. "Somebody Barker knows about. An American, I believe. Barker says the fellow is a kind of a queer fish, and has been up in the jungle here for three years—the only white. He's been studying the Dyaks, it seems, and knows a lot about them. Also, they like him."

"Then I should think," the girl answered, "that he'd be very useful to us."

"That's why we're taking him along," her uncle declared. "I understand that he's been in some sort of a nasty row back in the States, and is a sort of a self-made exile, you might say. Got into a tight squeeze, you see. Had to jump, probably, and jump to a spot where he can't be grabbed too easily. Guess China wasn't too safe."

"Poor thing!"

"Lots of that complexion out here," Wray went on. "But you needn't worry

about the way this chap will conduct himself, because Barker says that from all he hears, our friend upriver has toed the line proper ever since he arrived in Borneo. Sober and all the rest of it. Can handle Dyaks first class—that's why we're going to take him on. If we have any trouble coaxing him into the bargain, Marcia, please assist us with your nicest smile."

She smiled at the half turned head. "I'll do my best, Uncle Chichester."

The next moment, with an inarticulate exclamation, he caught up one of the automatics, thrust it before him in the direction of the forest and fired. And amid a screaming and a swishing, there fell something dark brown among the brilliant green boughs. Then came a single, dull thump.

"Got him!" Wray sang out triumphantly. He had a complexion like a woman's, and now the pink of it deepened with pleasure. "That's the fourth I've bagged in Borneo! Say! What do you know!"

She was still leaning forward. "But why do you kill poor, harmless little monkeys?" she asked, and the question was almost tearful. "I mean, uncle, that as long as the men can't get this one for food and—and don't need food, anyhow. Oh, please don't shoot any more! It—it spoils everything!"

Wray put back his head and laughed. "So you've brought me along down here," he replied, "with new pistols, and all the rest of it, and now you don't want me to kill anything!"

She did not answer that, but leaned back. He also leaned back, but continued to stare up at the forest wall.

Bright and blinding, the jungle fell into quiet again. Under a cloudless sky that every moment grew paler and more misty, as the sun climbed above the river and the heat increased, the line of *praus* trailed steadily through the water, making way with gradually diminishing speed as the Malays, tiring with their work, slowed the movement of their paddles, while their bare, streaming backs glistened more and more.

Though the scene was so bright and even cheerful, and though the warm air was heavy with the new and strange scents of the lush jungle, two of the white passengers —the men—were soon dozing with shut eyes, Barker with a half smoked cigarette drooping from his long and languid fingers, and with that set smile still upon his sleeping face.

But Marcia still watched out from under the curved hood of her boat. Ahead there were those shining brown clusters which were her own boatmen; to the rear, between the braced, bare, yellow feet of her Chinese servant, was the rippling track of the fleet. Elsewhere the river was unruffled and oily. It was not until high noon that the forest opened; now here, now across the stream, to show a small rice field, or a glimpse of low hills that were a misty blue.

Wray wakened, fretting at the heat. "Not very exciting, eh?" he called to the girl.

"I've seen several native huts," she called back.

"Ironwood"—this time it was Barker speaking, turned squarely about in his *prau*. "That's the only wood that the ants won't eat up."

As Marcia did not reply to his information, he flicked his dead cigarette into the water, lighted another and settled back once more, smiling into the oily water just ahead of his boat's prow.

Gaps in the forest became more frequent now, and there were cleared spots planted with bananas, or there would be a small garden of pineapples about some poverty-stricken hut, little, ill-kept and standing high on stilts.

In every grove and close to every such hut, a pole stood up from which hung bits of colored rags, all such poles marking the position of Dyak graves.

After these few breaks in the green barriers of vine-linked and vine-festooned trees, once more the path of the *praus* was like a monotonous, dun-tinged road between green cliffs. Up and down that road sounds carried with startling clearness.

"Uncle," Marcia called, "what comes out of all these miles of jungle? Anything?"

Wray nodded, and apparently thrust out his chest. "A lot of raw products of one kind and another," he answered vaguely.

"But just what raw products?"

He guffawed. "Hear that, Barker?" he

demanded. "That's a question for a girl, eh? Marcia wants a list of your raw products!" His tone was proudly bantering.

Barker partly twisted about. "Gutta," he replied; "ironwood, rattan, honey, wax, birds' nests for Chinese nabobs, bears' skins and monkeys' skins, the last to adorn civilized ladies; also, boars' tusks and monkeys' teeth; bats' teeth, too, and all sorts of curios like blow pipes, and *mandaus* with inlaid handles, and poisoned arrows—"

"Jolly cargoes!" observed Wray facetiously.

Barker assented. "Especially the exports of serpents' fat," he added. "Pythons' fat, you understand."

"Sounds nice," declared Wray.

"But what goes back *up* the river?" asked the girl.

Barker took off his helmet to answer, almost as if he were trying to show the questioner that her inquiring of him honored him.

"Rice, Miss Oldham," he said; "cargoes of rice up this particular river, though, of course, in other districts the Dyaks grow it themselves."

"Thank you."

"Please let me tell you everything I can," begged Barker. "It's a pleasure."

"Not many girls take an interest in things of that sort, do they, Barker?" demanded Wray, and his shoulders lifted again with another swelling of his chest with pride.

"You've said it," pronounced Barker, replacing the helmet.

The white men slept again, and the paddlers and steersmen of the eight *praus*, weary and dripping with perspiration, lowered their dull eyes to their work and the moving level of the river, so that the *kampong* which was to be the next landing place stole slowly into view unseen by any of the voyagers save the alert Kwong Wing, standing at the stern of the last boat of the line, a cigarette between his yellow teeth, a neatly braided queue over one shoulder and his smoke trailing out behind him like wisps of faintly blue gauze.

The fact that the little fleet had reached its temporary destination came from the shore itself—suddenly, where the river made a long, curving turn. A chorus of shrill shouts, mingled with a jabbering of native exclamations, came to the travelers on the warm, still air. There followed the low pounding made by many bare, or lightly sandaled feet, hastening across soft earth. With the voices and the stamping sounded a clear tinkling.

Quickly raising their brightly-topped heads, the Malays of the boat line answered the greeting from the bank with heartiness, began paddling with something like zeal, chattered their relief and surprise and swept the water behind them faster on its course as they swung the prows of their craft in the direction of a strip of cleared riverbank.

There was space along this strip for the eight *praus* to come to a halt without breaking their alignment; as they reached the shallows close to the landing-place, the eager, brown hands of wading Dyaks caught at each boat in turn, as what appeared to be the whole remainder of the inhabitants of that *kampong* crowded and craned to get a look at the visitors.

As the eight boats came to a stop, laying end to end, to the girl who was leaned forward the better to see, the scene was strange and interesting—that forward pressing crowd of men, women and children, some of the men wearing waist cloths, some of them in the more familiar "shorts" of the tropics; the women modestly dressed in sarongs above which were loose jackets; but only the older children having on more than some shell ornaments, or, perhaps, a few charms.

Every head was abob, and a hundred mouths were going in a gay chorus of chatter. But the faces which smiled at the strangers showed no expected gleam of white across them, for the teeth of every Dyak were blackened by betel chewing, and their lips were weirdly red.

Even a glance told of striking differences between these forest people and the Malays. They were livelier, less reserved, more inclined to talk and full of pleasant laughter. Having come so precipitately to welcome their visitors, many of the women still had in their hands the work upon which they had been engaged when the first shouts an-

nounced the comers. Now they waved these bits of rattan-plaiting, or held their babies high in a gay greeting.

Some had tassels of wool in their ears. All had beads about their necks, or huge tin or brass ornaments in ear-lobules that were astonishingly elongated, or arm ornaments of various kinds. It was these and numbers of tiny bells which had set up the tinkling when the village had come racing to the shore.

"Ha-a-a!" called out Barker, half derisively, "here's His Highness!"

Into the very front of the jabbering, laughing crew had pressed a man who was plainly some one of importance in the *kampong*. He appeared to be of a bulky, muscular figure. But his head was small and his face thin, so that there was a comical lack of suitability between head and body. The head and the face were old, the streaked hair under the head cloth being scant, and the man's features were lined and dried in appearance, whereas his legs, below the jacket of leopard skin which he was wearing, were smooth and young.

"Lora!" he cried, naming himself. "Lora heard among the first, while nothing was yet to be seen!" In one hand he had a paddle, carved along its whole length. In the other hung down a shield that was like a huge, whiskered mask. He spoke in the dialect.

Barker answered the Dyak, but in Malay, nodding at him and waving a hand, after which he offered him tobacco, holding it out from his seat in the first *prau*, then rose to step on shore.

The Malays were before him, splashing the water about the boats, as they made fast and set about their work. Viewed face on, they were no more attractive as humans than the more savage Dyaks, though their starched headdresses added to their height and appearance. But their eyes were unsmiling, sullen, shifty; their teeth all black.

"Wray, I wouldn't make too much of a show of your shooting irons," was Barker's first suggestion. For Marcia he had a smile and a lift of his helmet, where she sat watching from under the ogee roof, smiling into eyes that were both friendly and curious, her face shadowed, the palm fibre hat doing service as a fan and the quiet, alert Kwong Wing squatting at her back.

"Scare the natives?" inquired the elder man, as if amused; but he thrust the pair of weapons into their holsters. He was still in his *prau*, emptied now of all its Malays except the steersman.

"Tempt 'em to thieve," Barker replied, widening that set grin.

While Wray was managing a landing for himself, taking care not to soil a white suit which was still immaculate, Barker went past the *praus* containing the holy woman, the fighting cocks and the covered provisions to address himself to Marcia, and with such a show of respect as would, according to his explanation, impress the *kampong* with the fact that the head of the expedition was a very great lady.

"You won't mind staying where you are for another fifteen minutes?" he inquired. "I believe you'll be more comfortable in the boat while we're looking up a clean house for you."

She assented. "Please don't hurry," she said. "I am not tired, and I've got a great deal to interest me. I think I'd rather get used to the village, and let it get a good look at me, before venturing out where you are."

Wray at his heels, Barker at once made off, scattering the Dyaks to right and left peremptorily to make a way for the white rajah. The Malay crews needed none of his attention, taking their orders from Goboh, whose men, by now, had donned the singlets of their dirty print suits—this in deference to the white *maharajah* who was hiring them—and were rapidly unloading such equipment, luggage and supplies as would be needed until dawn of the day following.

Lora, in dark-blue headcloth topping his warlike appearance, had taken himself off with Barker and Wray, followed by a half dozen of the older Dyaks. But when these few were gone, the crowd came together again with something of the quickness and impetuosity of two waves, and once more advanced until they were all but against the boats. For those who could stay were not to be torn away from what was, to them, of engrossing interest—the conical

baskets that held the fighting cocks, that lone, motionless figure of the veiled woman, and—most fascinating of all—the slender, white-clad figure of that shadowed one, to whose fair hair and delicate beauty they paid the tribute of their steady staring and a very din of admiring exclamations.

She stared back at them, reading the friendly approval, trying to examine each one of them in turn as carefully as she, herself, was being examined by them. Now her *prau* was made tight to the huge, partly submerged root of a tree, and her Malays were on land. Only the Chinese, Kwong Wing, remained aboard that last boat of the eight, still seated on his slippered heels, a cigarette between his right thumb and forefinger.

That crowd on shore had been greatly augmented by the swarm of Malays out of the boats. The paddlers, however, stayed on the upper part of the cleared strip of bank, gathered about the heaps of freight taken from the canoes and the baskets filled with birds. These last, roused by being taken ashore, were making a show of life, squabbling even, stretching wing and legs, and noisily anticipating the inevitable bath and meal of corn and maize.

Marcia, as she waited quietly, became aware, soon, that once more the crowd of Dyaks was parting to let some one through. She could hear the voice of a man speaking in a strange language which was not Malay —a voice like that of a white man. Next, at the center of the low-statured savage gathering, she spied the helmet of a taller man. Then over the heads of the brown people she caught sight of his face.

It was lowered a trifle, for he was smiling down at those whom he was gently putting aside. It was shaded by the green lining of his head covering. For a moment she could not see whether he was young or old. Another, and he came fully into sight, a tall, slim, young man in a khaki shirt and tropic shorts, with an empty holster on his right thigh.

Where she sat, in the gloom of that cabin roof, he could not easily make out her features. But he saw at once that it was a white woman in the last *prau*, and he hastily doffed his helmet, showing a head of thick hair that was even lighter than her own, and that contrasted strangely and strikingly with all the bare and the partly covered black heads that were circled about him tossing.

He halted and, helmet being off, squinted against the sun as he waited gravely for her to speak. His skin was bronzed, his hair was rumpled and longish; ragged, too, as if he cut it himself. Yet he was so little changed that she recognized him instantly, and once more crouched forward under her roof, staring up and holding to the gunwale.

"Philip Lansdell!"

Additional color swept his face—the red of astonishment. Then his grave eyes, which were dark-blue, lighted with joy. "You—you know me?" he demanded, as if scarcely able to believe the voice. "A—a friend of mine?" He leaned farther.

She went forward upon her knees, and the sun shone on her head and lighted her face. "It's Marcia!" she told him. "Marcia Oldham— Oh, Philip, how wonderful to meet you here!"

His voice shaken, he breathed an exclamation of amazement under his breath, stepped into the stream edge, bent and seized her by the hand. "Marcia!" was all he could say. "*Marcia!*"

Still grasping his hand to steady her, she rose to her feet. All the eyes that were watching them were forgotten as she stared and laughed and breathed her own amazement. "Of all people, *you!* Why, Philip, what under the sun are you doing up this *river!*"

"What are *you* doing up it?" he challenged, laughing back at her happily.

"Traveling for pleasure. But do put on your helmet in this sun."

"Put on *your* hat," he returned. "I'm a lot more accustomed to this sun than you are." As the Chinese, having dived under the cabin roof after the hat and with some of the swiftness of a darting fish, reached along the roof to hand it to them. Lansdell took it and gave it to Marcia with a bow.

She put it on, then reached for his hand again, since the *prau* was rocking. "Philip Lansdell," she cried, "I'm what uncle calls bowled over!"

His helmet was on. From under it he

grinned at her, his blue eyes suspiciously wet. "If you're bowled over," he answered, "coming on me in the jungle this way, what do you think *I* feel—and I haven't seen a white countenance in six months, not to speak of one as pleasant to observe as yours is!" He shook her hand a time or two, then bent and impulsively kissed it.

"Philip! Philip!" And now there were tears in her eyes.

"Angel out of Heaven!" he retorted. "For the first two seconds after I heard your voice, I thought sure that I was having a touch of fever. Or seeing something funny, and you know a man does see funny things sometimes in the jungle."

She laughed. "I wonder you know me. You know, I was in pigtails when I saw you last—three years ago it was, when I came down from school for Thanksgiving. You danced with me. Do you remember?"

"I remember. I hear the girls don't wear pigtails any more, Marcia. They've all cut their hair short. Except you." He bent to look under the hat.

She shook her head. "I'm up and in a net," she laughed. "Uncle says I'm old-fashioned."

"Uncle?" He grew grave again. "I haven't asked who's with you. I've been too overcome. Or how everything is. Your father—" He looked swiftly around.

"Philip, I've lost daddy," she said, and took her underlip in her teeth.

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" Now he took her hand in both of his. "I sort of sensed it. That's why you're traveling, isn't it—to get away after the first shock?"

She nodded. "The separation's been awfully hard to bear," she admitted. "Also, after father went, such a lot of worries and responsibilities came up. All of them, taken with his loss, was more than I could face, somehow, so—" She waved her free hand at the river.

"Worries and responsibilities are sure to come, of course, to a girl who's been left a big fortune. Well, up here life is simple. Also, there's a lot to see of one kind and another."

"I always wanted to travel—was always wild about it," she went on. "So when father was gone, I wouldn't sit down in New York, and I was tired of going abroad. Maybe I wanted to get away from nearly every one I knew—yes, that was partly it. I wanted strange places, some way or other, and new experiences, and as Uncle Chichester was willing to—"

"Uncle Chichester? That's a new one in the family."

"You never met him, probably. Belongs on mother's side, and when he heard what had happened he hurried several hundred miles to do anything he could, and it's been a real comfort to have him. He's lovable, and jolly, and travels with never a grunt." She laughed again.

"Good! Suppose he'd broken down under the suit cases away back yonder in San Francisco, or Honolulu? I'd never have seen you on the banks of this muddy water. Let's hope uncle will go crazy over Borneo jungles and head-hunters!"

"He simply eats up this having a troop of servants ready to hop at a word. Really, it's too funny! He's having the time of his young life!" She laughed merrily.

Until now, standing, he in the water and she in her *prau*, the two had been too surprised at their unexpected meeting to think of anything else but it, and the welcome sight of each other. Now Lansdell remembered the Dyaks crowding at his back, staring and smiling and whispering among themselves; he turned and, still giving one hand to steadying Marcia, addressed a few words to their audience, using the Dyak tongue.

"Fancy your talking a jungle language!" she exclaimed when he turned back to her. "What did you tell them?"

"That you are a great sultana, and the daughter of a great sultan, and I also said, because—if you don't mind—it will do me no end of good while I'm working among 'em, I said, also, that you had come up the water road to visit your humble servant."

"I'm glad you did. It's the truth, too. Anyhow, if I'd heard you were up here, nothing would have kept me from coming. Because—" She broke off and looked over the heads of the crowd, to see whether or not the other two white men of the expedition were returning. "Before they come back, Philip," she began again, hurriedly,

"there's something I want to say to you that I don't want them to hear."

"You've got some news—from home."

"Yes. Philip, that awfully sad thing that happened before you left and came down here—it's all cleared up, Philip, and settled, and your friends — everybody, in fact—understand how it all was, and what you suffered, and that you weren't in the least to blame, but that you acted so honorably, and—"

He turned away his face to look up river. "It's too bad," he said, with a touch of bitterness, "that they didn't believe what I told them when I was there—those friends of mine."

"Yes, it *is* too bad," she agreed. "It makes you bitter, doesn't it? But, *please* don't look like that!"

He looked back at her, smiling once more. "We'll forget it, eh?"

"Try to remember that they honor you," she pleaded. "Especially for just keeping quiet, when you might have told a lot, and also for not striking back when you could have, you know."

"Don't I know!" he rejoined. "And I'll try not to be bitter. Just yet, though, I can't shake off the disappointment I feel. Later, maybe I can. But, Marcia, I've found out during this trouble of mine that one of the hardest things in the world is to survive disappointment in some one you've cared a lot for."

She nodded, sympathetically and understandingly. "I'm sure that's so. I've never been disappointed like that, but it must be hard. You trusted those people, and they wronged you — horribly. But, you know, don't you, Philip, that there are some people left in the world who aren't treacherous?"

"Sure! Sure! And now I want you to forget my troubles and tell me some more news."

"Not while you're ankle deep in the river."

"I like it! All I can think of is the luck I've played in to-day! Your finding the way up this Borneo river, and stopping like this, and—but, by the way, did you have a reason for stopping? Where's your uncle? And can I be of service?"

"I'm sure you can. We've stopped to pick up a white man—to hire him, that is—for the remainder of our trip up the river."

"A white man here?" Lansdell looked puzzled.

"You must know about him," she continued. "It seems, according to what Mr. Barker told uncle—Mr. Barker is with us, you see, and got the boats and the men and so on for us—it seems that this man has sort of buried himself alive in the jungles up here because he's been in trouble wherever he came from, and is afraid of being arrested."

"I see." There was a curious gleam in Lansdell's blue eyes.

"I suppose," she said confidently, "that you identify the man he means now. It's a man who's famous for the way he understands Dyaks of all shades and sizes"—she smiled at that — "and the way the Dyaks understand him. At other *kampongs* higher up, Mr. Barker thinks this man will be invaluable in helping us to see everything there is to see."

"This Mr. Barker didn't give you the man's name?"

"The fact is, I've got it all through uncle—just to-day, as we were on our way up. Uncle says this white man is from the China coast."

"Hm-m-m-m!" Once more Lansdell was half turned away, silent and thoughtful.

"Are there several men here?" she asked, puzzled by his silence.

He did not reply to that. "This Mr. Barker," he said, "is he some one who's come all the way with you?"

"Oh, no. We met him at Macassar. He showed us all about, and was so good-natured and useful that uncle thought it 'd help us see everything we want to see if we'd take him along. He's not what you'd call personally attractive—at least *I* don't think so—but uncle likes him immensely."

"I see. He knows Borneo? I mean, how did you come to get up this far on this coast?"

"At Macassar he told us about Banjarmasin, and that we oughtn't to miss it. We'd arranged to go to Sandakan with

Captain Emery, on the Sabra. When we told the captain that we wanted to go to Banjarmasin, he bargained to change his route—at a figure, of course. And took us. I wouldn't have missed it, just as Mr. Barker said."

"And then?"

"You think there's something odd about it, Philip, don't you?"

"I don't know what to think—yet."

"Well, we came up the coast after leaving Banjarmasin. When we got part way up, Mr. Barker began to tell us about the interior on this side of Borneo. He said that North Borneo is so civilized, and so up-to-date in every way, that a traveler can't really see any natives who haven't been changed. But here, up any of the rivers, we'd be able to get a taste of real savage life, he said."

"What did the captain say?"

"He didn't care what we did, so long as he got paid for his time. You see, he owns the Sabra. So we went ashore, down at the mouth, and Mr. Barker arranged for our trip. He met Goboh, and Goboh got four *praus*. Afterward he was able to get four more. It seems that he knows this country well."

"This is Dutch territory. What white men did you see before you started up?"

She looked surprised. "Why, none. At least, *I* didn't see any. I'm sure uncle did —and Mr. Barker. Should we have seen some Dutch official?"

He eyed her squarely. "Yes. And I can't think how it happened that you didn't. Also, this Barker has cooked up a cock-and-bull story for you and your uncle. The man he tells you about has never been in trouble of any kind—never been arrested—never set foot on the China coast."

Marcia stared at him, a little startled. "You know all about that man?" she asked.

"*I* am that man."

"*You*, Philip?" She was aghast. "How do you know he meant you?"

"Because I'm the only white man at this *kampong*. Also, I'm supposed to know Dyaks, and they know the Dyaks like me. You see, since I hit these parts, I've studied them pretty closely. And I've discovered some things about them — strange things. The strangest of all is that if a man gives them straight, fair, decent treatment, instead of planting a poisoned arrow in his back, the way my bunch did back home, these people have a most uncivilized way of returning good for good, affection for kindly treatment." He nodded, smiling. "They're just like animals, aren't they?" he concluded.

But she was scarcely thinking of what he was telling her. "You're the only white man here," she said. "And Mr. Barker means that you've been in trouble—are a self-made exile, as uncle put it."

"More people jumping to conclusions," he added. "One would almost think that there were malefactors enough in the world without tacking the charge against a man who hasn't done anything but mind his own affairs."

She took a deep breath. "I don't like what Mr. Barker's done," she declared. "Suppose I didn't know you? I'd believe it, wouldn't I, and not treat you properly? Why, it's a *terribly* mean thing! Whatever made him do it?"

"That's the important question, of course," Lansdell agreed. "Perhaps he's one of those chaps who likes to tell something startling. He's being dramatic—lots of people are like that, you know. Or maybe a lie comes more naturally to his tongue than the truth. The Borneo climate, I've observed, sometimes plays tricks with the Anglo-Saxon conscience."

"I think I know the reason," she went on, "and it's a perfectly silly one. Promise you won't think I'm throwing bouquets at myself, and I'll tell it to you."

With his left hand, and smilingly, he crossed his heart. "Don't trouble to throw any bouquets at yourself," he rejoined teasingly, "because these woods are full of first-chop orchids, and I intend to keep you well supplied. You won't need any of your own gathering."

She was too much in earnest either to listen or to smile. "I believe Mr. Barker doesn't want me to think too well of the man he intends to pick up here. It's all very simple, Philip. What lies behind that

story of his is just nothing more nor less than plain jealousy."

He grinned. "Plain jealousy is one of the most dangerous little complexes in the world," he retorted. "But suppose we have some fun with Mr. Barker!"

"Philip, I'm not sure of him at all. And now I'm quite uneasy. So let's not try to make him more jealous. On this trip I don't want a single complication."

"What I suggest will be all your way," he assured her. "Let this Barker, whoever he is, go on thinking that you believe his tale. You might even inquire about China of me—not too cordially, of course, but in a cautious way. Express surprise that any white man should bury himself alive in a far-off place of this kind; and I'll be uneasy, and evasive, and not answer you directly. Then we'll be able to study Mr. Barker."

"We'll do it." She gave his hand a little shake.

"It's a good thing to test men sometimes," he went on. "For instance, what kind of a deal will I get out of Mr. Barker when he thinks I'm here under cover? The measure of a man's mercy is the measure of that man."

"Exactly. And I'd like to watch, too. At any time we can make a frank statement of the truth. Meanwhile, of course, uncle will also have to think you're an escaped murderer or something, because—well, uncle isn't very subtle." She laughed at that. "If he knew who you are, Mr. Barker would have the information out of him straight off. But it isn't going to be easy for me to pretend that we've just met."

"It 'll be a lark," he answered. "Be very reserved with me when this Barker is around—snub me, if you want to. When we're alone, a smile or two will be all the more welcome." He laughed.

She also laughed. "By contrast. All right, it's a bargain. But whatever do you think all these brown people of yours have been thinking—seeing us stand in this foolish fashion, holding each other's hand?"

He swung partly round to look where she nodded, and he looked at the watching crowd, something like affection in his eyes. As if sensing his feelings toward them, and understanding him, the silent brown men and women returned his look with a more generous showing of their black teeth, and all those shining, sharp eyes glistened.

"They're coming!" Marcia suddenly announced. "Uncle and Mr. Barker. I shall sit down." And she dropped back and under the ogee roof, losing her hat as she went, but regaining her seat in time, while Lansdell steadied the *prau*.

Shod feet and bare were indeed approaching. A moment later the Dyaks who had stayed to watch at the boats again gave way to right and left, letting Wray and Barker come through. The headman and his satellites on their heels.

"Ah, there you are!" sang out Barker as he caught sight of Lansdell. "We've been hunting you on the other side of the *kampong*. I forget your name, but mine's Barker, and this is Mr. Wray, Miss Oldham's uncle."

He did not offer to shake hands, nor did the elder man, and Lansdell kept his own thrust into his pockets. The faces of the two newcomers wore strange expressions. Wray was plainly surprised, and was staring and blinking at the man who was still standing in the water. But Barker's look was an open sneer. With that sneer was mingled something like resentment. Lansdell was plainly too young, too well groomed and far too good-looking.

Lansdell's face was a study also. Under his pith head covering his eyes, squinting to hide their expression, bored through the pock-pitted countenance before him. However, he was muscularly contriving to smile—in spite of the fact that his face was fairly stiffened by surprise. In Barker he had expected to see a man he had never seen before. And the truth was—

Wray set his helmet on the back of his head and gave a jaunty wag of the head. "We want you to go upstream with us, Mr. Lansdell," he announced. His tone said that the request honored the young man before him, and an answer of acceptance was instantly expected.

It came. "I'll be very glad to be of service."

"Thank you." Wray's head jerked.

Barker had gone up along the tethered canoes, bawling out an order to one Malay and another. The older man followed, waving certain venturesome Dyak boys out of his path.

Lansdell faced about and leaned down to finger a bit of rattan tied into a thwart close to Marcia's white shoes. "Marcia," he whispered. "Did you say this Barker is a new acquaintance? Where did you get hold of him?"

She saw that something unexpected had happened. "Yes, new," she replied. "Uncle met him on shipboard. They played cards together day and night. You're going to tell me he's no good."

The other two white men were beyond hearing, watching a Malay give his favorite fighting cock a bath. About Lansdell and the girl were only the Dyaks and that squatting Chinese, the latter seemingly drowsing, between his right thumb and forefinger the never-absent cigarette.

"No good," repeated Lansdell, nodding. "Anyhow, the last time I saw him he was sitting on a bench in the yard of the white department of the Singapore jail."

"Philip!"

"Sorry to tell you, but you needn't worry, for I'll never leave you out of my sight until you're safe back on your homebound boat. But I couldn't make a mistake about that swarthy, pitted visage of his, could I? And the time I saw him he had the unhandsome decoration of the broad arrow."

CHAPTER II.

SUSPICION.

THEY did not get another chance to speak to each other in confidence during the remainder of that day. Wray came back, with a sort of pounding step, as if he had made up his mind to something very firmly. It was not difficult to guess just what that something was, either. For without a glance at Lansdell, he addressed Marcia:

"Come out of that boat, my dear. Must be hot enough under there to fry an egg! I know you'll be more comfortable on the front porch of Mr. Lansdell's house." This was his way of asking hospitality of a tall young stranger who was reputed to be hiding from the elastic arm of the law.

Lansdell said nothing, but across Wray's bent head he gave the girl a quick nod and a warning look. The nod told her that she was not to object to occupying his house; the look cautioned her against paying him the compliment of asking his consent. When the quick hands of two Dyaks had brought the *prau* a step or two nearer dry land, and Wray had helped his niece ashore, Lansdell was already out of sight beyond that section of the crowd which was now occupied with watching the landing of that veiled woman.

Lansdell gave the creature a searching glance. It was not more than a glance; settled in his mind as to what type of man he would be dealing with when he came to be a part of this expedition with Barker, he was careful not to seem curious about this one Malay woman who had been brought along—knowing how quickly too much interest in her, seeing that she was back from a pilgrimage, would meet with Malay resentment.

He found that Barker had been busy. From where the luggage and stores had been placed ashore, a string of Malays were now starting villageward, each heavily loaded. Barker, as he superintended the work, was living up to his name, for he kept up a running fire of commands, interspersed with Malay expletives. When the last load had been lifted from the ground, he turned and strode along beside the carrier. Though Lansdell was, by then, at his very hand, Barker did not take any notice.

He quickened his pace in order to catch up with the headman of his line. Arrived in front, he turned the direction of the leader so that all might go by the shortest route to the newest and largest hut of the *kampong*. This stood high on pillars of ironwood on the outermost edge of the great clearing. Like all the other buildings of the place, it was set above a lower platform which was, itself, a few feet above the ground. Up to a wide, shady veranda with a bamboo floor, a veranda which was

extended to either end of the hut, and covered, as it was, by a new attap roof made from palms, extended a comfortably slanting, wide, well-made flight of stairs.

Lansdell did not follow the Malays. Standing with his back to the river, with a few Dyaks clustered about him, he looked after Barker, and the brown of his face took on a tinge of red.

"Cheek!" he said aloud. "Doesn't intend to ask favors, but take them." Then, with a laugh and a shrug, "I doubt if it's done for Marcia's benefit. I fancy the man doesn't even know what's decent under the circumstance."

Wray and his niece were already in the wake of the carriers. Lansdell came on behind. After him came trooping the Dyaks, chattering noisily, gesticulating. But at his side walked one who did not speak, but watched him questioningly. When the line of carriers were ascending the steps to lay their loads on the two short verandas, Lansdell halted on a pretext of lighting a cigarette, and it was then that the Dyak addressed him.

This man was younger than the headman, who was now planted with an air of importance to one side of Lansdell's front steps; he was taller, too, and had evidently taken time, when he knew strangers were at hand, to put on such ornaments as would add to his appearance. Against his shoulders, hanging down to his collarbone, he wore tin earrings in his elongated ears. About his neck were several strings of beads, scarlet and blue. His arms were bangled, as were his legs. His waistcloth of bright blue matched a cloth that tied back his longish hair, wisps of which stuck out here and there, giving his head a wild and ragged aspect.

"Sir," he began, "so many thieves to watch."

"To-night, Hetdoon," Lansdell replied, "you and I do not sleep."

At that the brown man's look changed. There was a guttural assent, a flash of the eyes that told plainly how well satisfied he was, and he turned aside toward one of the few but large houses which composed the village. Lansdell started homeward once more, strolling among the numerous headstones which here marked the graves of the *kampong's* dead-and-gone headmen.

Near the foot of his own stairs he halted again, hemmed in by scores of Dyaks who gazed upward, fascinated by all the signs of wealth and plenty, by the faces of the new white people, by the sight of the strange articles which the Malays were laying out in neat array on those side verandas —suit cases, traveling bags, cases of bottled water, and well-wrapped packages of every shape and size.

As the Malays came swiftly back down the staircase, shaking the whole house with their pattering bare feet, Lansdell took a careful look at them. They did not seem to be of pure Malay blood. Here and there were plain evidences of a mixture—white, or Dyak, or Chinese. That the Dyaks shared the opinion of Hetdoon concerning them, Lansdell saw, for the men of the *kampong* stood aside as the paddlers started riverward again, watching them silently, sometimes murmuring a word to right or left.

"Thieves is the word," Lansdell told himself. "These must all be ex-convict friends of our gentleman, Barker!" The thought amused him, but only for a moment, for next he remembered that the safety of Marcia Oldham depended upon them. "They must go back from here," he added. "And I'll go with them."

"Come up and have one of your own chairs, Lansdell," called out Wray.

As he leaned over a low bamboo balustrade to look down at his host, a second face appeared beside his. It was the face of a young Dyak—Lansdell's house servant. A scarlet head cloth bound his forehead, keeping back the wiry hair from a countenance that was almost pale.

"Sir, must come," pleaded the servant, speaking in his own tongue. "The yellow man wearing a twisted tail down from his head just now drives out Tomon."

Lansdell laughed, and hurried up the stairs. Evidently Marcia's Chinese boy was taking over the culinary quarters, and Tomon was both frightened and insulted.

When explanations had been made, Lansdell joined Wray on the front veranda. The latter, finding himself so comfortable

once more, with whisky and soda at his elbow, and a cigar between his teeth, was complacency itself.

"Glad that cook of yours is placated," he laughed. "Thought for a minute or so that there'd be international complications—the jungle versus the Celestial Empire, you understand. Mad? That's the maddest Dyak in these woods. He won't take Kwong Wing's head, I hope. I understand head-hunting is a favorite pastime among these people."

Lansdell smiled. "Well, head-hunting has figured in local history," he admitted. "But that's before my time. These days you'd have to go into the interior to meet such habits. These river people are very decent citizens, and you'd like them if you came to know them. They're honest—you can leave your things around and know nothing's going to be touched. They're truthful, too. Fact is, they haven't yet acquired either the graces or the disgraces of our civilization."

"I'm relieved to hear you say all this," confessed Wray, with a wag of his round head that was comically dubious. "But they look wild to me. And that's why I agreed with Barker that we ought to fetch plenty of boatmen along."

Lansdell did not reply for a moment. Then, "Did Mr. Barker ever hear of an attack on travelers up this river?" he inquired.

"Not lately I think."

"I fancy not," went on the younger man, with a touch of irony in his voice. "If there's trouble, it's instigated always by people who come upriver, trading and so on. You and Miss Oldham are safer in this *kampong* to-night than you'd be in some European or American cities. And just now the villagers are particularly sweetened up. We've had a visit lately from some very open-handed moving-picture people."

Listening, Wray's face wore an unpleasant expression, and he did not look at Lansdell. Here was a man who was notorious, even in the jungle, as a fugitive from justice; and he was emphasizing the truth and the honesty of savages. "Sand in the eyes," mentally observed Mr. Wray.

Lansdell had his own thoughts, and they were troublesome. In the first place, he was already regretting that he had told Marcia the truth about Barker; in the second, he was turning over the matter of passing on that same information to her uncle. Now he was sure that Barker had built up an ugly yarn about the man whom the expedition was to take on as a guide for a reason other than jealousy.

"He's damaged me in order to set up himself," he concluded. "It makes him appear to be particular, which he isn't. But chiefly what it does is to make Mr. Wray feel that I can't be trusted. Maybe I'd better let Mr. Wray know that I'm an old friend of Marcia's. If he can't keep it to himself, well—"

But even as he swung partly round toward his guest, the first words of an announcement on his tongue, Barker emerged from the open door of Lansdell's larger room. He had changed from his traveling outfit to siesta apparel, and had on wide, gayly printed cotton trousers and a voluminous cotton jacket to match.

"Advise you to follow my suit, Wray," he observed as he sank into a near-by chair. "Nothing like this Dutch outfit for the middle of the day."

Wray stared, caught his breath, sat back, and swallowed. "Marcia coming out?" he asked. The question was a rebuke.

Barker guffawed. "I'll be in a hammock," he returned. But as he proceeded down the veranda to where the hammock was hung, his eyes narrowed, and he pushed out his lips resentfully.

Now Barker was within earshot. Lansdell postponed the confidences he had intended to make. "How much farther upriver do you plan to go, Mr. Wray?" he inquired.

Instead of making a direct answer, Wray darted a look past his host to the brightly appareled heap in the swinging hammock. "You mean you have things to do here," he said, and again there was a sneering note in his voice; "and we'll be interfering with 'em."

"I have some work under way," Lansdell asserted.

"A week of your time will be enough,"

Wray went on. "In seven days I fancy Miss Oldham and I will see about all there is worth seeing along this river."

"You've seen all there is worth seeing already," was Lansdell's blunt comment. "The river doesn't change an iota for more miles than you'll care to have your boatmen paddle. High up, of course, the stream narrows, and gets dirtier. As for the *kampongs,* one's mighty like another."

Barker broke in, turning the conversation. "Mr. Wray's a crack revolver shot," he announced. "And I've promised to give him a bit of deer hunting."

Wray had a new subject. He faced about on Lansdell, ready to cut the latter off from any more questioning by asking a few things on his own account. "What do you do up here when you get sick?" he demanded. "No doctors, no hospitals, nurses and so on. Nothing, I suppose but the simple remedies."

"I doctor myself," Lansdell replied. "I was just about ready to take a degree in medicine when I came out here, so all my training in that line stands me in good stead. These savage people aren't as healthy as one might think. Back in America it's fashionable to talk about the simple life, and the great outdoors, and so on. But neither seem to keep the Dyak free from disease. It's surprising how disease gets them—fevers, and other tropic troubles."

"I suppose you dose 'em a bit, eh?" Wray asked. "That must have a good deal to do with your popularity."

Lansdell made no answer, again resenting that tone of raillery. Now other nearby verandas were crowded with natives, all on a level with his own, and all silently keeping watch of the three white men. He turned his head from side to side to look at them, and in that look was both fatherliness and affection.

Barker popped up his head once more. "Ever go higher up for your doctoring?" he asked.

"Sometimes I've gone as far as a boat can go," Lansdell said. "Usually, though, they bring the sick down to me. It's easy going in a boat, and they have the patient here to hand, instead of merely a request that I go to him."

Barker turned himself over with an exclamation which Lansdell could not hear. "Oh, you're *just* the chap to take along!" he called back, and began to hum to himself as he swung.

He did not trouble to rise when Marcia made her appearance—in a dress of some soft, white material, simple and cool-looking, the costmue completed by a large, colorful fan. At her appearance, even those natives crowding the nearby verandas broke forth into exclamations of wonder and admiration, craning to stare at her.

"My dear!" greeted Wray, on his feet at once. "Do you hear 'em? You're like some great goddess from another planet! Perfect furor, I call it! Don't blame 'em, either!" Gallantly he kissed her hand.

In her long gown, half housedress and half lounging robe, she seemed tall to Lansdell, and he told himself that she had shot up in these last three years since he had seen her. In the old days he had taken as little notice of her as possible—this because of the pride in him that had forbade his seeming to be too cordial to a girl whose future inheritance promised to count up into the millions.

"But she's unspoiled," he told himself now. "Level-headed, too." He liked her composure, and the quiet, effective way she had of waiting a moment before expressing her opinion. It was this which made her seem older than she was. But the almost babyish curves of her throat and face made it certain that she was still under twenty.

She turned her clear, gray eyes toward Lansdale. They were full of meaning, and not a little mischievous, but her voice was casual. "You don't get lonely up in this jungle, Mr. Lansdell?" she asked.

"I've had my share of loneliness," he admitted, "but not to the extent of being a hardship. And I've had a lot of interesting experiences. That might not count with a woman. It does with a man."

"It counts also with some women," she answered. "It explains why I'm willing to have some discomfort. I mean to see the whole world, if I live—all of it, even the out of way places."

"Your Uncle Dudley will show it to you, darling," broke in Wray, with a smile which

was meant to be fond. He turned to Lansdell then, and the latter had the feeling that the elder man was, for some reason, veering the conversation from the subject of travel in general to the particular *kampong* upon which they were looking. "So few houses here," was the comment, "and so many people."

"Every house has about two hundred souls under the roof," Lansdell explained. "In some villages you can go from house to house without touching the ground. Also, you'll find the dead in mausoleums above the ground, and not close in among the houses as we have them here."

He talked on, now answering the queries of the other two, now relating his own adventures of one kind and another, or repeating bits of local history and explaining Dyak beliefs and superstitions. Listening, Wray drowsed, feet spread out, and chin on breast. But Marcia did not seem to be tired. What she and Lansdell longed for was an opportunity to talk to each other alone. But throughout the long, hot afternoon this was not afforded them.

Toward evening, when the sun dropped among the giant trees behind Lansdell's big hut, he called the still sulky Tomon and sent the servant to fetch Hetdoon. And when the two brown men arrived together, with none of the bending and touching of foreheads made familiar by the Malays, for they stood before him, straight and rather proudly to hear his wishes, he spoke to them about a program for the coming evening, that the young sultana from his own land might see how Dyaks celebrated in honor of a visitor.

"Do you notice any change in your audience?" he asked Marcia. "They've *all* gone and put their jackets on. That's in deference to you. From now on, you know, they'll count history from the visit of the eight *praus*."

There was sudden activity in the *kampong* now, as the people prepared to carry out Lansdell's suggestions. From somewhere came the piping notes of a bamboo nose-flute, as a player practised for the evening's entertainment. With it sounded the rasping of a native fiddle. Voices called from hut to hut.

An old moon was hanging in the sky as Lansdell led his guests in to dinner. The table was spread in his spacious main room, around a large table which Kwong Wing had extemporized for the purpose. Despite the fact that the little party were in the depth of a jungle, with savages peering in at them through the many large wall openings from every nearby hut, white linen covered the board, which was set with silver, lighted by candles, and beautified by freshly gathered flowers.

It was Lansdell's turn to show amazement. "Well, this is a new experience for me!" he declared. "Now I know what was in all that procession of luggage!"

"I said I meant to have only *some* discomfort while I was seeing the out of the way places," Marcia told him. "Do you like our service? These white metal plates are my own idea. I had everything made for the trip before I left New York."

Immaculately smart in all white, his starched tunic fastened with filigree buttons, Kwong Wing served a course dinner about which Lansdell renewed his marvelings. "This is something for me to remember when you're gone," he said, a trifle wistfully. "But where on earth did you ever find such a treasure of a Chinaman?"

"He just came to me," explained Marcia. "And for that reason both my uncle and Mr. Barker were a trifle dubious about fetching him along."

Barker, in white again, but showing signs of having had some liquid refreshment before he came to the table, roused himself sufficiently to protest suavely. "It's because the man can't talk English, Miss Oldham," he explained.

"He understands," she retorted, "—perfectly. So his not being able to talk doesn't really count. He cooks well, he's quick and deft, and carries out an order like a soldier. I liked him from the first."

There was finality in her tone, as if she was dismissing the argument for the last time. And though she was so young, Barker, after taking a deep breath, as if he meant to continue his objections to the servant, thought better of the idea and subsided; but there was an expression on his lowered face that Lansdell did not like.

"In revolt," concluded the latter. "How he'd like to put her in what he'd call her place. But he doesn't dare. Hm. I wish I knew what he was in limbo for at S'pore!"

Underneath, as Lansdell had guessed, Barker was boiling. Now, not caring to come into open disagreement with his young employer, he turned his rancor on Lansdell. "I'm afraid you're going to find yourself a bit too busy to come up-river with us," he asserted; and gave Wray a sidewise glance that invited the latter's coöperation.

But Wray's blue eyes opened wide in astonishment. "Good heavens, man!" he ejaculated. "Don't put any busy ideas into Lansdell's head! We want him! We need him! You know Malays, right enough, but not one of us here knows Dyaks. What are you talking about, Barker!" His look was direct and extended; puzzled, too, as if the other man had somehow swung straight about.

Barker laughed a little drunkenly as he picked at his fruit salad. And there was a swift interchange of glances between uncle and niece, after which her cheeks took on the deep rose of anger, and her lips trembled, as if she were about to add something to the short controversy; but she thought better of it, and turned again to Lansdell.

"I suppose there are some interesting personalities among the Dyaks," she said. "I mean when one comes to know these people intimately, as you must know them by now. There are *rajahs*, aren't there? and sorceresses? and other queer characters?"

"Bigamists, you mean, my dear?" inquired Wray. "You left them out."

"I once asked a headman about their marriage customs," replied Lansdell, "and he wagged his head sadly. 'The Rajah Dinda,' he told me, 'has six wives to scold him.'"

At that Barker laughed loudly, but stayed hanging over his plate. "The old beggar's right," he asserted thickly.

"I suppose cannibals are a thing of the past," observed Marcia. "Though I'd give a lot to see a real one."

Lansdell smiled. "You shall have the experience at the very next *kampong*," he promised. "There's an old ex-cannibal there —a chap who says he ate the long-pig when he was a young rajah. His name is Mabong."

At that there was a general movement about the table. Barker stopped eating, and lifted his head. Wray involuntarily turned toward him, nervously blinking his blue eyes. Marcia put down her fork and leaned forward to address Lansdell.

"Mabong in the *next kampong?*" she asked incredulously.

"You're on the very edge of his territory."

Now it was plain that Barker was annoyed. "Ain't you mixed up a little on the name, Miss Oldham?" he asked, not looking at her.

She did not answer. "Mr. Barker told me that Mabong was away up this stream," she went on, speaking directly to Lansdell. "I feel certain I'm not wrong about the name, because down river, where we took our *praus*, one of the sailors on the Sabra told me that this Mabong was supposed to be very rich—supposed to have a great quantity of golddust buried under his house."

There was a moment's silence that had in it something electrical. During it, neither of the other two men glanced at Lansdell or at each other. As for their host, he avoided Marcia Oldham's eyes, fearing that his own would betray the thought that had sent his heart up into his throat.

Presently he was able to speak carelessly. "Golddust under his house?" he repeated. "I doubt that. You're going to be disappointed, Miss Oldham. I've seen him. He doesn't look like a rajah at all. He's a ragged old chap, and what he needs more than anything else in this world is a good soaping and a scrubbing."

She did not smile. "Now, that gold story?" she persisted—whereat Barker shifted himself impatiently in his chair. Wray was also plainly annoyed. But she went on: "You've heard it, haven't you? You don't think it's true? And you're quite sure Mabong's as close as you say?"

"He'd never dare bury gold under his house," Lansdell answered. "With so many Malays down below who'd be bound to hear

such talk, his life wouldn't be worth a Borneo penny. No, it's the usual brand of gossip. One Dyak is supposed to have a corner on green diamonds; another has all the *bezoar* stones in existence. In these parts there's the same kind of wild talk there is among idle people back home."

They had their coffee on the veranda. The moon was down by then, and the short twilight was past. Through the mosquito bar which Tomon had lowered they could see the flashing lights, tiny and fast disappearing, of myriads of fireflies, and the steady lamps of glow-worms. Above, in a sky of black velvet, galaxies of stars burned, almost startlingly large, but lending no light, seemingly, below the level of the surrounding jungle.

Now there was a chill in the air, and Marcia donned a shawl. But soon carefully tended bonfires were blazing, and lighting a weird scene. Once more the village was gathered in one place—in gala dress, Lansdell explained. *Damar* torches sprinkled the dark that lay beyond the circle of the fires. To locate many of the Dyaks was the small, steady spark that told of a lighted cigarette.

Sometimes the glare of the fires reflected for a moment on the surface of the river, when the smoke could be seen floating away to filter itself through the high tops of the trees. A drum began to beat an ominous note out of the blackness under a hut. Next, to the mingled notes of flute and fiddle, lines of dancers moved forward into the firelight, where lances were tossed and swords flashed, and dark faces came and went.

"It looks horribly real," Marcia declared. "I'm glad it isn't."

"There isn't a man down there," Lansdell answered, "who wouldn't fight to the death to protect you—if he understood that I wanted him to because you were in danger. Do you notice their rattan helmets? And the caps are monkey skin."

"To-day," she said, "I noticed many of the women with lines of bluish spots on their arms. I suppose those are chiefs' daughters."

He laughed heartily. "Don't mind me, will you?" he begged. "I couldn't help it. You see, that's the native vaccination."

As she joined in his laughter, Wray and Barker went aside, to the far end of the veranda. There, leaned on the bamboo railing, they talked for a moment, Barker gesturing impatiently, and as if he were insisting upon something.

Lansdell took the opportunity to have a few words in confidence with Marcia. Taking care not to move too quickly, or to show that any unusual topic was being discussed, he leaned toward her, at the same time making a pretext of pointing down to where the war dance went beating on, with the monotonous sound of the drums, and the circling of brown bodies.

"*Aio! Aio! Aio!*"

Lansdell had to speak in her ear. "Marcia! There's something about this whole business that isn't right. I mean the trip —and Barker."

She nodded vigorously. And quick to use his own pretense of being interested in the scene below them, rose and stood beside him, also pointing. "You mean his drinking?—more than he—that is, so much that it shows! It's disgraceful!"

"I mean the reason he's here. I don't like it. I wondered why there were so many Malays along—*double* as many as you need."

She looked at him, troubled and questioning. "Uncle wanted me to employ Barker. And Barker said we ought to have at least sixty men."

"Marcia!"—he turned his back toward the men down the veranda, not wishing them to see the expression of his face, or the words his lips were framing. "Why did Barker tell you that Mabong is away up river? And he didn't want you to mention the rajah to me. Marcia, I don't like it. I tell you! I believe this rascal is using you and your uncle as a cover."

"For what?"

She straightened, looking beyond him, where the two men had suddenly parted. Wray was coming back to his chair. Lansdell turned a smiling face over his shoulder to look at the two, and saw that Barker was watching the girl, his dark, pitted countenance fairly quivering with emotion.

"For a scheme to go after that gold-dust," answered Lansdell.

Wray came up behind them, taking Marcia affectionately by the hand. "Where are our Malays, do you suppose?" he asked. "Don't they like this show?—Marcia, my dear, do you notice the two women with the shaven heads? They're in mourning, Barker tells me."

"I was just showing them to Miss Oldham," declared Lansdell, "and explaining that those girls who aren't tattooed are single."

Marcia was smiling, composed as ever, and intensely interested. "The Malays are resting, Uncle Chichester," she said. "You'd be resting, too, if you'd paddled half the day."

"Dead to the world, I suppose," agreed Wray, "even after lounging all afternoon. Lansdale, this is an amazingly barbarous scene! What a sight this would be for the neighbors if a man could transplant it back home! Do you take up this ladder of yours at night?"

Lansdell shook his head. "Not as a rule, I don't. But you may both sleep without a thought of danger. I can doze in the boat to-morrow. I'll stay up to-night."

Some one moved close at his back. He turned. The Chinese, Kwong Wing, had come out upon the veranda, fetching tall pitchers filled with a brownish liquid.

"Ginger beer!" announced Marcia. "It's good even when it isn't iced." She turned to fill the four glasses.

Kwong Wing bowed, that smooth, yellow face as expressionless as a mask. But for a moment he lifted those black, bird-like eyes of his to Lansdell. The look that he gave the white man was a strange and searching one. Then, with a patter of soft-soled slippers, and a flash of his white coat, he disappeared into the shadows of the big room.

CHAPTER III.

WARNING!

LANSDELL had hours of time during which to turn over the matter of the expedition, and consider the pros and cons of a possible attempt to make trouble and rob in the *kampong* higher up. He did not leave his own veranda during the remainder of the night. When the fires had died down, and the natives had dispersed, shrilling a last wild song, Hetdoon came to him to say that the Malays were on their mats, wrapped in their calico *sarongs* against the night air.

"All save the holy woman," Hetdoon reported. "She sits apart, communing with—who knows!"

Wray and Barker were occupying cots in the large room, the latter lying close to a side opening. Lansdell could hear both men snoring, and now and again Barker murmured something, and tossed on his narrow bed.

"Under a strain," Lansdell told himself. "Of course, Wray isn't in on any scheme to take loot. He and Marcia are just a cover—just a pretext for getting into Mabong's village with a small army. But *if* he tries the business, what then?"

He had a swift vision of what the business would be like—a treacherous, unexpected attack upon a town that would welcome in the friendliest fashion any line of *praus* that came bringing himself—the doer of magical things concerning good medicine.

"Of course, Barker wouldn't go by and pass me up," he thought. "Even if he could pull the wool over Mabong's eyes by fetching visitors, and one of them a woman, he'd have to take me along, because if I got wind of the whole thing before he and his Malays came back down, I might make it hot for 'em as they passed."

Then came another idea: "But if this Barker has such a villainous plan, and carries it out, what about Wray and Marcia and me? He can't make us a part of the theft, and if he leaves us behind him—"

He got up, troubled and uneasy, and walked his own veranda. "No telling what those Malays would do," he went on. "They'd do anything for a little money. Well, I've heard talk about that buried golddust, and I believe this is the time that something's going to happen. If it wasn't for Marcia, I'd like to see the business start, but I'd tip off Mabong first. As it is, I must stop Barker here. Yes, that's what must be done—stop him right here."

He remembered Wray's speaking of the

ladder. "That's the man to talk to," he concluded. "I'll show him that he can't risk taking that crowd of Barker's to Mabong's. If fighting begins, he won't come out unscathed. I'll put the case in front of him in the worst colors possible."

Now the darkness in the clearing was unrelieved by any lights except those of the glow worm and the firefly. Against the swaying walls of mosquito bar, armies of insects came wafting, with a hum of their many wings. Occasionally, larger wings flapped through the dark as some night-haunting bird swung between jungle and river. A double chorus that never ceased was made by the sharp staccato of the crickets, and the croakings of frogs.

It was perhaps an hour after midnight when Lansdell heard Barker's voice, raucously complaining in a half sleepy way. He went down the veranda and around the corner to that wall opening which was close to Barker's bed. The latter was standing in the opening in his pyjamas, a lighted flash light in one hand.

"What's the row?" asked Lansdell.

The light jerked to show a figure lying on the bamboo floor. It was that of the Chinese, who seemed to be breathing deeply. In one hand he held a long, small-bowled pipe.

"Oh, you beggar!" scolded Barker. "I took you for a good boy, and here you're a smoker!"

Lansdell exclaimed in disgust. "That's the way!" he mourned. "A man thinks butter won't melt in their mouths, and the next thing you know they're hitting the pipe!"

"I didn't want him," asserted Barker, letting the light go out. "In the first place, he don't know enough English, and in the second, I hear he's a convert. I always let that brand alone. It's all rice-religion, anyway."

"May I have your light a moment?" asked Lansdell. When the small, black torch was in his hand, he bent and let its circle of yellow shine full into the face of the sleeping man. That face was smooth, relaxed, placid. "You never can tell about John Chinaman," added Lansdell as he handed the torch back.

He managed to get Wray aside for a talk soon after a breakfast that was served at dawn. Kwong Wing had prepared it, and seemed no worse for his smoking. He bobbed a bright good morning to each of the four, and even responded with smiling "Yes-sies" when requests came for more coffee. With Barker gone to oversee the preparations for the start, and Wray drawn aside for that short conference with Lansdale, the Chinese sang to himself, all the while washing and packing swiftly.

Lansdell had no time in which to prepare Wray for what must be said. Marcia was out of hearing, making her own preparations for the day's journey. Lansdell, so earnest that his voice shook in spite of him, came out squarely with his suspicions and his fears.

That round, red-and-white face of Wray's paled at the words of the other, and the stocky figure slowly drooped into a chair, as if Wray were on the point of fainting. Then, his helmet clutched in his carefully manicured fingers, Wray gasped and stared, swallowed and shifted his feet.

"Good Heavens, man!" he said finally. "Don't let Marcia hear you say anything like that!"

"I've already told Miss Oldham that I don't like the looks of things," confessed Lansdell frankly. "My conscience wouldn't allow me to do anything else."

Wray's blue eyes hardened. The color came flooding back up his full throat. "Really, Lansdell," he said, "this is outrageous! What right have you to put such terrifying ideas into that girl's head! And before consulting with me, too! Why—why—"

"But you won't go upstream, will you?" pleaded Lansdell. "I don't mind if you curse me for what I've done. What I want to do is stop this expedition here, Mr. Wray. I tell you, Mabong's *kampong* is just like this one—except that you'll have no clean hut for your camp to-night. Then where will you put Miss Oldham? And there's danger, Mr. Wray! I know it! I feel it!"

Wray rose impatiently. "You're being dramatic or something," he observed sarcastically.

"Sixty men!" went on Lansdell. "Why

so many, I'd like to know? Don't you see that it 'll look bad to every *kampong* you visit? Why, my people here had sentries on all night—armed and ready. You don't know this Malay crowd. They don't intend to go back where they came from. If they did, they'd never have brought along their birds. Or that woman in the veil. Mr. Wray, they're on this trip to loot. If they fail or lose, they'll be off along some side stream, where nobody can track them, and they'll hide until the storm is over. And you—"

"You know Dyaks, Mr. Lansdell," interrupted Wray. "Barker understands Malays. I admit they're not handsome; but neither are your friends here." He attempted a smile. "But Barker's used this same lot of paddlers before. They're straight enough. So please don't give yourself so much concern. You know, *I* haven't any hankering for trouble up in this place where you've buried yourself alive"—this with a significant look. "Also, I'm a trifle more anxious about the safety of Miss Oldham than even you can possibly be."

Abruptly Lansdell started across the room, heading for a curtained opening beyond which was that smaller room of the hut. But he was scarcely half way to Marcia's door before Wray had managed to stop him, holding to his arm almost fiercely. "Now you'll not frighten and worry that girl!" he asserted. "What you need is sleep. The tropics, and being up all hours, have played havoc with your brain."

Lansdell stopped, wrathful, but temporarily thwarted. He halted, looking down, and swinging his helmet against a leg.

"She's just lost her father," Wray went on. "She's got enough to grieve her. I've been trying to take her mind off her troubles. Don't you add to them. You haven't any basis for your extraordinary statements, and you know it. Just suspicions, that's all, and I won't have her feelings wrought up by them."

"I tell you, she already knows what I think," Lansdell returned.

That curtain moved, and Marcia came out. They had kept their voices lowered; but she saw at once that something unusual was under discussion.

"The number of men, I'll admit, is a sort of graft," Wray began, turning to her as if for confirmation. "But the cost of each is so little, and it's pleasant to spurt along if we feel like it, which wouldn't be the case if we were short-handed."

Lansdell turned to the girl. "Do you think it's only graft?" he asked.

Wray did not allow her a chance to reply. "If there was anything wrong about it," he continued, his tone gently argumentative, "wouldn't the men be armed? But there's nothing of the kind. As for the woman, she's a part of their superstition. They'd think our customs are strange, wouldn't they, because we send out a cruiser with a chaplain aboard?"

"I tell you, it's a thieving expedition!" Lansdell blurted out. "But how am I going to make you see the thing as I do! Wray,"—he grasped the older man by the shoulder and almost shook him—"this Barker is an ex-convict. I saw him in jail myself—at Singapore. I was on my way down, and—"

Wray laughed, and set his helmet on the back of his round head. "You and Mr. Barker," he observed, grinning, "have the same story about each other. You know, Lansdell, it doesn't help Miss Oldham and me to feel any happier when we realize that you and Barker may have known each other in prison."

"Now, look here!" Lansdell was angry enough to speak all of the truth. "That yarn of Barker's about me is another sure sign that something is wrong about this trip. I've never been in trouble in all my life. I'm not here for any such reason, and your niece knows it. She and I are old friends—friends of long standing. I knew Colonel Oldham well. But yesterday we made it up between us that we'd keep all this a secret. Now though—"

Wray's face was a study. As he listened he glanced from Lansdell to the girl, and from her to Lansdell again. His eyes were round with astonishment. His mouth was open. "Ha," he breathed. "So. Old friends."

"Barker knows I'm not a crook," Lansdell went on. "That's another reason for my suspecting him. What's behind such a

rotten story? Wants you to depend solely on him, doesn't he? And of course, if he means to carry out this piracy against Mabong, he'd fetch me along and mix me up in it—or get me killed."

Wray half turned away, avoiding Lansdell's look. "It—it seems silly to stop here," he said, "and turn back. Furthermore, speaking of danger, I was thinking of that when I let Barker sign on so many boatmen. Everybody says there are pirates in these larger rivers. They hold up people right along."

Lansdell was not to be budged from his stand. "I'm a lot more worried about this gang you've let Barker hire for you," he declared, "than I am about an attack from river thieves."

A voice sang out from across the clearing—Barker's voice: "Hallo-o-o-o-o! All ready for Moeara Koli!"

Marcia had a small bag in her hands. Her uncle reached for it. "All right, my dear," he said, with the air of one who is about to set out. "The men have taken everything else. Shall we go?"

She turned to Lansdell without speaking.

He tried to smile down at her. "I hope I'm as wild in my conjectures as your uncle thinks I am," he said half jocularly.

Her brows were puckered gravely. "It's a difficult position, isn't it?" she returned. "If we grant that Barker has a plan against that rajah, then we've got to admit that he's willing to see us get into serious trouble—perhaps lose our lives. To use us for a looting junket—well, it 'd be monstrous!"

"*Moeara Koli!*" It was the call again.

"Come along," urged Wray gently, and held out a hand to the girl. "If Mr. Lansdell feels so concerned about the trip, he can stay here. But all this talk is quite absurd—"

As they moved to leave the room Lansdell followed. "I haven't the slightest intention of staying behind," he declared. "But I do ask you, Mr. Wray, to keep your eyes open, and let's tell each other if we see anything that we don't like."

Wray was going down the steps now, swaggering a bit under the rows of black eyes that were waiting before the hut for a last look at the visitors. "I'm afraid there won't be anything you'll like on this trip," he retorted.

Lansdell made no reply. "Marcia," he said, "you know I'm not nervous about myself. And under ordinary circumstances a trip up this stream as far as there's water to paddle through wouldn't give me the slightest concern." They were walking in a line toward the *praus* now, behind them the attending populace. "But I'm not satisfied as things are. Why not change your mind—you can do it—and tell Barker that we won't move on to-day. Stay here, you see, until we can talk this thing over a bit. There's no rush, is there? Time, I mean, isn't a consideration? If something's wrong—"

Barker met them, his face glowing with anger. But he was careful to conceal all signs of it in his voice. "The men work best in the early morning," he reminded the others. "Lansdell, you go in *prau* Number Six. There's an umbrella there if you like one."

"Thanks."

Hetdoon came running up, balanced on his head the large tin box containing Lansdell's luggage and professional kit. The box was added to the pile in one of the forward *praus*, then Barker was off, his paddlers singing. Wray went down to see Marcia into her covered cabin. He disdained to mention the subject that was uppermost in the minds of those three who had not yet started.

"Enjoy this fine morning," he told her gayly.

Lansdell was beside him, waiting for a last word. As if indifferent to any confidences that the two young people might have when he was out of hearing, he returned to his own *prau*, climbed into it amid a babble of greetings, and shoved off.

"I hope I'm all wrong," said Lansdell. "If I'm not, here—"

He broke off. Behind her, bare feet planted wide apart, and a cigarette in his teeth, was Kwong Wing, seemingly all ears for what was being said. Until he knew what were the real relations existing between Barker and this Chinese, Lansdell knew that it

would be unwise to let the servant know what he suspected.

"As a matter of fact," he said to himself as, seated under the umbrella, his *prau* strained out to take its place in the straggling line, "it may just be that the Chink wasn't smoking opium at all last night. The whole thing might have been some kind of a plant—to make me think the Chink's no good, or something like that—to turn me against him, anyhow. And I'm not so sure that Kwong doesn't understand that things are not as they ought to be."

He raised and lowered the umbrella in a final salute to the Dyaks hallooing their farewells to him from the beach. Then he folded the shade, for there was a down-river breeze, and the umbrella made a sail against which the paddlers were forced to work. Ahead, the procession was aligned as it had been the day before. Back to him came the sound of Barker's voice as he sang and the noisy squabbling of the fighting cocks.

He had a better chance to observe the Malays than he had had the day before. Half naked as they were, with their long earrings and their black teeth, and their shifting look and general air of indifference as to what the white man might think of them, his own crew impressed him more unfavorably than ever.

"Am I crazy?" he asked himself. "When have I ever felt so dead sure of a thing without a substantial reason? And I can't get it out of my head."

He tried to control the impression which beset him; tried to shake off his feeling of worry.

From time to time he called back replies to Wray's questions, or he pointed out whatever there was to interest a traveler—for example, a smoke rising from a coal formation, where a fire had been burning, report said, for generations, giving the effect of a live volcano.

Wray asserted stoutly, and repeatedly, that he found the scenery better than that laying below the village just left behind. At some places the jungle gave place to bamboo thickets, which lined the banks like huge upstanding green feathers. In one spot there was a pebbly beach, and here, set high above the ground, were three coffins shaped like canoes. Beyond this native cemetery considerable excitement was afforded the expedition as a wild boar took to the water—a great tusker who swam easily and swiftly, grunting as he went, and only shaking his head as Wray, in spite of Marcia's earnest protesting, tried his skill at the beast with one of the automatics.

Toward the middle of the day the line of boats drew up, one after another, to a beach that was white and pebbly, and here the expedition stayed throughout the hottest hours of the day. Under arching branches that made a gloom of green, mats were spread for the comfort of the white passengers. Here the Chinese served a lunch he had evidently prepared at Lansdell's. When it was cleared away, and his packing was finished, he went aside alone and lay down.

"Smoking again, I suppose," Barker grumbled to Lansdell.

The Malays did not rest. The fighting cocks were brought out, washed, and made ready for a fight. The pit was a natural hollow fenced by the paddlers themselves. Two birds were chosen, keen-bladed spurs were fastened upon the feet of both cocks, the blades were plentifully rubbed with lemon to make the wounds smart, and the contest was on. One after another a trio of defeated fowls were decapitated in a businesslike way by one of the Malays, who used his *mandau*. The number of birds being thus quickly reduced, the sport came to an end.

Then the boatmen fished, using large squares of calico, and not taking the trouble to throw small fish back into the river, but callously allowed them to die among the ferns, where they came slipping out of the cotton sheet. All the while they kept up a noisy chattering and moved about actively; from time to time certain of them made sure they were being watched, when they rolled their dark, bloodshot eyes in the direction of the party seated upon the mats.

"They're like children," Lansdell explained. "Love to show off, and are never

so contented as when they know they're being observed."

A half dozen of the boatmen had gathered in the shade not far away and were playing heads-and-tails with cent pieces. Marcia Oldham shook her head at them. "They're cruel, greedy children," she declared; "and I think they've got the most unattractive faces I've ever seen on human beings. I'm sure we saw kinder-looking ones at Banjarmasin and Sandakan. Or is it my imagination?"

The men laughed. "You're having a close-up," Lansdell explained. "But they do make a person think. If immortality is a truth, what becomes of the souls of such as these?"

"They take up their residences in the bodies of little serpents," Marcia declared, not without a touch of humor. "I'm sure every last one of these boatmen has a dirk concealed about him."

"I'm afraid you're not enjoying this little trip, my dear," observed her uncle, with a trace of irony.

To that Marcia made no reply.

The sun had perched like a huge red flower on the top of the jungle when the boats moved on once more. Lansdell was seated in the place given him, recalling what Marcia had said about the Malays, and telling himself regretfully that he had done wrong to rouse her fears and suspicions, when he noticed a square piece of paper which was pinned with a bit of sharp bamboo to the woven and padded mat under him.

He unpinned the paper. It was carefully folded once. When he spread out the single sheet he found it covered with writing—small, close, neat, and in pencil. Taking care not to seem surprised over the find—for the steersman at his back could look down upon him—he read the writing.

Evidently the message was meant for him. Having read it once, he stared at it almost dizzily. Then he read it a second time, feeling less surprise and more concern. The wording of the communication was the strangest thing about it, for this was curiously old-fashioned, with a courtesy belonging to another time. But what the overformal phrases conveyed to Lansdell, already disturbed in his mind, set his heart to pounding. The note began:

ESTEEMED AND HONORED SIR:

It is with mingled pleasure and pain that I take up my pen to address you. Kindly favor me with a belief in my sincerity, while permitting me, by this paper, to inform you that four boats are richly loaded with rifles.

CHAPTER IV.

A STARTLING DECLARATION.

"WELL, who wrote *that?*" was Lansdell's next thought. "Not Wray, because it's just opposite to what he believes. And not Barker; he wouldn't gain anything by letting me know how things stand—not at this juncture, anyhow. It would suit him better to take me by surprise. If Marcia wrote it—but she didn't. She could have told me this back there in the room."

He folded the paper into a small wad and thrust it into the watch pocket of his trousers. "We've got an educated Malay along," he concluded. Then with a sense of gratification and triumph: "I said this was a bad expedition—it's as plain as day! Barker's hired a bunch of cutthroats to shoot up Moeara Koli and dig under Mabong's house. He's swallowed that old gold-dust yarn, and is using Wray and poor Marcia as blinds. I'm taken along because the sight of me will down the suspicions of the victims. Also, Barker didn't dare pass me and try the fool plan out. Well, by all that's idiotic, we're in for it!"

Now came a sickening thought: unless he could interfere at once with the plans of a madman, the girl in the *prau* behind, innocent of any part in the disgraceful adventure, helpless, and unused to the sight of blood, had before her a frightful adventure.

"Wray's picked a dangerous criminal to escort them up here," he said to himself, "and Marcia's paying the bill. It's as neat a plan as a crook could think up. What can I do about it—*now?*"

He thought of pretending illness, and tipping himself sidewise into the water, thus delaying the advance at least temporarily.

"If I could get Barker to pull in again," he thought, "I might manage to stop the whole outfit right here. The best thing would be to coax Barker away from everybody else and stun him, then make them think he's been taken sick suddenly, and urge a right-face."

But this had its dangerous aspects. "We'd be absolutely in the hands of the Malays," he reasoned. "If they're bent on the Mabong business, they'd go ahead—Barker, or no Barker. And if we proved to be a nuisance, they'd make short work of us." The plan was not good. "If I could only send on a warning ahead—" It was the next idea. "That's out of the question, though. If there was a path, I could beat the canoes. But I'd have to leave Marcia here. I mustn't separate from her if I can help it. I wish I could spill the rations into the river. I wish I could put something in the supper of this bunch that would lay them all out!"

Then he began to doubt the whole thing. "Why, Barker can't be such a villain—he can't be! And the Malays wouldn't dare go in on this business if they ever intended to show their faces at a civilized port again. The sun's got me, or somebody's playing me a joke!"

He laughed with relief. "That's it!" he exclaimed. "Wray told Barker what I said this morning, and Barker cooked up this letter as a joke. Fixed it up out of some old copybook that he remembers. Probably thinks he'll make a fool of me before Marcia—it would, too, if I were to kick up a row. Yes, Barker's trying to string me."

And yet his apprehension did not go. The men were driving forward at a good pace. Though the sky was all afire from a sun which was no longer visible, he knew that the distance between boats and camp was fast shortening, and Mabong's village would be sighted before dark.

"First off, I'll show this paper to Marcia and her uncle," he resolved. "I'll chance getting laughed at. I'll advise Marcia to pretend she's sick; then I'll warn Mabong's men, and pull out into the river with two canoes. Wray can steer one, and I'll steer the other, and depend on the current to take us. I'd like to stay and help the village, but I must think of Marcia first. Yes, getting away is the best plan. And there mustn't be any waiting."

He would not leave the line to talk to Wray or hand the note to Marcia. The paddlers had their orders, and to countermand them would rouse Barker's suspicions—not a wise thing to do prematurely. He forced himself to sit quietly in his place, his look on that helmet in advance, where Barker lolled in *prau* No. 1. But Lansdell did not take things easy, though he was motionless. Up every boat length of the distance his will urged on the fleet.

When the *kampong* was just before them the stream made a wide turn to the left, and it was on the point of that elbow, where the river was shallow and slow of gait, that Mabong's people had built. At Lansdell's village all the huts were on shore. But as the canoe line bent round a green promontory, if a low platform had not barred the way, Barker's *prau* could have gone between the ironwood pillars of the first house in Moeara Koli.

The village was large, the arrival of the fleet unexpected. Everywhere, on the open platforms under the scattered buildings, the people were lounging in the cool of the evening. One hut was placed centrally and facing the stream. It was fully a hundred feet long. But under it were only a few women and children.

"The gold-dust house," was Lansdell's first thought. Here it was that any attack on the village would center.

Before Marcia's boat was alongside the river bank all of red-brown, foot-packed soil that was overlaid with powdery dust, the villagers were pouring out of their houses, and, babbling loudly, mingling in a stream which headed toward the fleet. Well to the front of the mob was an aged man whom Lansdell did not recognize. To his regret, he saw that on the old man's thin legs were heavy bangles of gold. The old man led on proudly, the usual paddle in one hand, and he used it as a staff. A cap of monkey skin was perched on his head. From his ears hung triple ornaments that clanked at each step. His jacket was red, his waistcloth blue, and this last fell to his bent and bony knees. At the front

of the cotton twist a deerhorn handle told of the presence of a dirk.

But with him were no other men except a handful as aged as himself. Lansdell did not wait to greet these patriarchs, and hoped they would not yet recognize him. He ran back to where Wray's *prau* was being held against the platform of a house, while its white occupant was clambering out of it on hands and knees; as he stood, awkwardly and stiffly, Lansdell saw that the elder man was strangely pale.

"I've got to have a word with you," began Lansdell, breathless.

Wray scowled.

"I hope you're not going to begin that again," he answered irritably.

"Please come with me," bade the other. He took Wray by an arm. A rude bridge led from the platform to a second, which was under the hut down-river, where the girl's roofed *prau* was stopped.

She had not left her boat, but at sight of the grave face of the younger man she got up hastily and allowed him to help her to a place beside him.

"What's happened?" she asked.

Lansdell gave her the letter, then turned to Wray. "These Malays are armed," he said. "One has given me the information. This Barker, just as I told you this morning, has planned a looting attack on a peaceful *kampong*."

Instead of exclaiming, or demanding to see the paper which was in Marcia's trembling hand, Wray faced about. A hundred feet away, at the center of a brown mob that was still and staring, the carved handle of that oar was being shaken above the bright headcloths of the people of Moeara Koli.

"*Nda! Nda! Nda!*" a voice was crying in protest. That leader was not receiving the boatloads of Malays hospitably.

"I think we ought to join Mr. Barker," asserted Wray, avoiding Lansdell's eyes, and making as if to step out upon a sagging board which formed a bridge between the house platform and the bank.

Lansdell caught the other man's arm for a second time. "Look here!" he exclaimed angrily. "Don't you want to see this paper? Don't you care—"

"Who wrote it?" Wray demanded. "I can't be made to jump every time some one opens his mouth."

"Who wrote it isn't important just this minute," Lansdell replied. "The important thing is, is it telling the truth? Have the Malay boatmen got rifles? Have you heard anything about that?"

Wray threw up both arms. "Oh, drop the subject!" he exclaimed. "What do you want to do—frighten this girl? I've heard nothing to-day but your boo-booing!"

But, Lansdell was not to be brushed aside. "I don't like the way you're acting," he answered. "Do you think we have policemen stationed along this stream? If there's trouble—"

Wray addressed Marcia, on his face what seemed to be a smile. "Barker assures me that our men are more than equal," he said, "to the villagers at any settlement where we may land. You aren't worrying, are you, my dear?"

Lansdell reddened with sudden rage. "Of course the Malays are equal," he retorted. "For the simple reason that the men of this *kampong* are away from home."

Scores of brown and tattooed legs could be seen approaching, their owners bending almost double to peer down at the visitors.

Lansdell went on, speaking lower. "Did Barker tell you he was bringing a lot of guns along?"

"He might have."

Now the girl spoke, and as if shocked and pained. "Why, uncle, you *must* know whether he did or not! If he did, the rifles must go into the river—now—before anything can happen! Philip is a better judge—"

Wray's face was every shade, his eyes were hard, his lips puffed out resentfully. "I advise you to keep out of this, Marcia," he retorted. "Get back into your boat and stay there, and you won't need any policeman. If this old savage up here has a lot of gold that he doesn't use, and can't use, and our men want to take it—"

Lansdell bent until his flaming countenance was all but against the face of the

older man. "You *approve* of the insane scheme? You *know* about it—after denying it under my roof? *Do* you? Speak up!" His tone was full of incredulous horror.

"You might as well know the truth," answered Wray carelessly. "It 'll save you from mixing yourself up in this business. I *do* know about Barker's plan. So do his Malays."

The crew of Marcia's *prau* had scattered, leaving only the Chinese aboard, and Wray threw out a hand toward where the paddlers were once more taking certain bundles and packages out of the boats.

"*Aa-a-aw!*" groaned Lansdell, his fingers twitching to grasp Wray by the throat. "You're an utter lunatic!"

"Well, all right," returned the other indifferently. "And you can stay here if you want to, and rave about it. Barker intends to have a dig at that house he's been told about. If they let him alone there won't be any row; if they don't, they'll bring the trouble on themselves."

"No-o-o-o-o!" breathed Lansdell, appalled.

"I can't see any harm in taking the stuff if it's there," Wray declared brazenly. "I don't mind telling you that I'm in on the scheme."

CHAPTER V.

THE HOLY WOMAN.

WRAY made no attempt to leave. Lansdell did not speak for a moment, though his lips moved. Marcia stared at her uncle, a hand to her forehead.

"It's not too late to stop the attack," said Lansdell. "I will go and tell Barker that you've changed your mind."

"That won't change Barker's mind," Wray replied, shrugging. "He looks at it the way I do. This Dyak crowd are like dogs in a manger. They can't use gold—or they don't, anyhow—and they go bury it. Well, if the Malays are willing to take a chance, and get a share—"

"This is the most barefaced proposition I ever heard of in all my life!" broke in Lansdell furiously. "You stand up here with this girl at your side, and tell me that we've been brought along to an outrageous attack on a poverty-stricken old man who hasn't anything and will get killed trying to defend himself and his people!"

Now Marcia spoke, almost wonderingly, and very quietly, a hand on Wray's arm. "Why, it can't be true!" she said. "I know there's something—well—like a joke about this. You're honest, Uncle Chichester, and you're square, and you haven't gone crazy."

Wray laughed unpleasantly.

"That all sounds just like what I thought you'd say," he remarked, as if amused. "But let me say to you, my dear, that you know very little about other people, because you're so busy thinking just of yourself."

She swayed, as if he had struck her. "Have I been selfish? Have—have—"

"You can call it what you want," said Wray sneeringly. "Certainly you've never thought of how I stand since we left home. I'm a sort of a servant, ain't I? Yes—a courier, you might say. I can run errands, and ask for funds, and all the rest of it!"

"I didn't know that hurt you!" she cried. "Why haven't you told me? Oh, Uncle Chichester!"

Lansdell broke in. "Never mind how you feel, my friend," he told Wray. "There's something more than your pride at stake here. Do you understand that? The lives of people—the safety of this girl!"

Wray was not impressed. "Let me give *you* a bit of sound advice," he returned. "If you know what's good for you, if you want to protect Marcia, you'll join with the rest of us on this proposition. Whether you think it's right or not, anyhow, we're three white men, aren't we?"

"You can't make me a party to this skulduggery!" Lansdell retorted. "And I tell you, you're going into this rotten business for nothing! Mabong hasn't got any dust!"

"You can't mean what you're saying!" added Marcia imploringly. "Not a crooked scheme like that! Uncle! Don't let Barker use you as a catspaw! Don't you

realize what it means? You and I—we'll be utterly disgraced! Uncle, I'll give you as much money as you need. I've got plenty! I—"

He broke out into laughter. "*Have you!*" he said. "Maybe you have. But that doesn't do me any good when I lose at cards."

"So *that's* where the shoe pinches!" It was Lansdell.

"Exactly."

"How much?" Marcia went on. "But I don't care how much! I'll never give you reason to say I'm stingy again—or thoughtless. Uncle—it's all wrong! It isn't decent! Oh, *don't* let yourself be influenced like this! Why, it isn't a *bit* like you!" Now she was near to tears.

Wray nodded. "I suppose I'm to have a sermon," he said. "I'll be damned, eh? Lost, or something like that! Ha! Ha! Ha! Say, that's comical! Just look at yourself, Marcia. Look at your clothes, for instance. You've never thought that I might need a few extra dollars, have you? But here, in the everlasting jungle, among a lot of Dyaks, you've got on a dress worth two hundred!"

She looked down at herself murmuring.

"She bought it with her own money," answered Lansdell. "She's given you a wonderful trip, hasn't she? Are you going to pay her back by mixing her up in a robbery that will be cabled to the end of the earth?"

"She didn't earn her money," argued Wray. "Not a cent of it! And I've tagged along like an upper servant of some kind, and I'm looked on as a man who's bumming off his niece! A nice position for a man to be in!"

"Why! Why!" What he was saying had so staggered Marcia that she could not collect her thoughts.

"This girl's never thought of putting you in an unpleasant position," asserted Lansdell. "But you're certainly about to fix yourself in good shape! You'll know what a bad position looks like!"

"You don't know how I've been situated. You've known me just two days."

"I know the whole family," persisted Lansdell. "And Marcia's been judging you by herself. She'd fear to insult you by an offer of pocket-money."

In the dimming light, Wray's figure was stubbornly tense. "Barker will help me plump up my purse," he replied.

"Barker's pulled your nose!" Lansdell answered. "That's because he wants to use you. He's been waiting for a chance to get up to Moeara Koli with fifty gunmen. You're the easy mark that's made it possible. Well, when he and his men have got what they want, do you think they'll divide up with you? Nonsense! You won't even get away with your life!"

"I think so," said Wray.

Lansdell turned to the girl, still stunned, and all but speechless. "Is this man really your uncle?" he asked.

"My mother's foster brother," she answered.

Lansdell laughed. "I thought so! Well, that makes my job easier. Wray, you're in wrong. It's Barker who's done time. I saw him in Singapore jail myself. Wray, try to see this thing right before it's too late! You're not going to lack money. And we three can keep this all to ourselves."

Wray half turned away, as if uncertain. Then: "No, it's too late," he answered. "If I hold back—"

Barker's voice could be heard issuing orders to the men. He sounded cheerful. Evidently he was indifferent to the fact that none of the others had made an appearance.

Lansdell lowered his voice. "We can get away," he said. "Just you and I and Kwong. We'll put Marcia back into the boat. She can lie flat. We'll be around the turn in five minutes. Wray—"

There was a shake of the head. "Barker'd fire at us," he said. "No, I can't back out of it now."

"Then, listen!" From a pocket Lansdell produced a long glass phial, so thin that it was more like a section of a large needle than like a bottle. It was wound with scarlet paper upon which were Chinese characters. "I'll give her one of these," he said. "It 'll make her sleep and we can tell Barker that she's terribly sick."

Now Wray appeared to agree. "Yes," he said. "Go ahead. Give the medicine.

After all, I think that's the best way out of it."

Lansdell uncorked the tiny phial. "Get back into the *prau,* Marcia," he bade.

She was pathetically undecided and looked up at him imploringly. "But not to know anything," she began; "and I might be able to help myself, Philip."

"*Marcia!*" he pleaded.

As she turned, Kwong Wing had grasped the outer edge of the bamboo platform, bringing the boat against the floor. Kneeling, his face raised, he waited for her to step back under the roof.

"I don't think this is best," she murmured. "There's something about it I don't like."

But Lansdell, crouching, had handed her the small dark pellet out of the phial. "Wray, tell Barker that she's fainted—that we've got to go back. Go out and do what I tell you! *Wray!*"

Marcia's trembling fingers took the medicine and she placed it on her tongue. Wray was gone, and they could hear him as he shouted Barker's name.

"He's been like one of the family—always," she told Lansdell, the tears flooding her eyes. "And, Philip, there's nobody else any closer. If anything happens to me—"

"Not that!" Lansdell exclaimed horrified. "You don't think he'd plan to—to—"

"Inherit?" She was lying back against a plaited pillow, and Lansdell could see that her eyes were shut.

The Malays had taken their paddles with them. Without waiting for Wray to return, Lansdell stepped into the shallow water and turned the boat, heading it out.

"Shove!" he commanded.

Kwong Wing was already shoving away, the end of his steering paddle planted against the platform edge. But he was able to come free of it, for the blade was in the hold of Barker, who had sprung down upon that lower floor with a crash that shook the whole structure.

"Here!" he yelled. "You can't leave! What're you thinking about?"

Lansdell, waist-deep, turned himself about. Between him and the crowded shore was the long canoe, holding the sleeping figure of the now unconscious girl. Her head had fallen to one side. Her face was pallid. Beyond her, through the ogee roof, crouched the Chinese, yellow-white as he clung to his paddle and uncertain whether to let go or be drawn back.

Beyond Kwong Wing was Barker, grinning out at the man in the water. He was not alone on the platform. Beside him stood a figure which Lansdell, though startled, instantly recognized. It was short, stocky, naked to the waist. There was a bead-embellished cap on a bullet-shaped head. The lined face under the cap wore little tufts of stiff, black hair at either side of the long upper lip and on the chin.

It was the face of a Malay. It was a cruel face. Its owner was wrapped round, from the waist down, by many folds of calico, and he held them tight about him with both hands.

He spoke. "Must come back," he informed Lansdell, good-naturedly enough. "Ya! Must come."

Lansdell came, pushing the boat before him. In those folds was laying a revolver of a modern pattern, grasped by long, brown fingers. His own weapons were below the surface of the river, full of water and useless. It was not a case of opposing one man—Barker. Here was a new opponent, an ally of Barker's, and without doubt an able one.

But by the solemn eyes in that tufted face, as well as by the tight-held cotton folded about him, Lansdell knew him.

This was "the holy woman!"

CHAPTER VI.

"THE GAME IS ON."

THERE was something about the whole situation that had the strangeness of a dream. This was Lansdell's thought as he shoved the *prau* shoreward, watching that group on the platform as he came. That he and Marcia Oldham should be there on that forest-walled river; that they should have come in the company of men who were there to rob a peaceful village; that Wray should be a partner in the dishonest and foolish enterprise—it was all past belief.

"Miss Oldham must get away," declared Lansdell. "You can see yourself that she's unconscious. I haven't the proper medicines here."

Barker waved the *prau* nearer. "Glad you doped her," he answered carelessly. "That'll save her fretting when we get to work. Just stay right here, though, if you know what's good for you. If this business yonder"—he jerked his head backward in the direction of the *kampong*—"goes smooth, we'll be pulling out in two or three hours."

Lansdell reddened with anger; but not at Barker altogether. He realized that Wray had betrayed the giving of the pellet to Marcia. However, as Barker turned away, that transformed figure of the Malay leader at his side, Lansdell did not waste time in upbraiding Wray, who was preparing to go with the other two.

"Barker, look here!" he exclaimed, letting Goboh take the *prau* from his hold and climbing to the platform. "Don't you know that this whole proposition is wild? Yes, it is! There isn't anything but Borneo dirt under Mabong's platform! That's the truth! Surely you won't go into a thing that'll end in bloodshed just on the strength of such a wild yarn!"

Barker had a foot on the narrow bridge between platform and bank. "Well," he returned affably, "if Mabong ain't got any dust under his hut, we can't rob him, can we? And you'll agree that there ain't a lot of harm in doing a bit of digging, won't you?"

"You forget that Dyaks are born fighters," answered Lansdell. "A little digging sounds harmless, but Mabong's men will wipe the grease from their blades." This was sheer bluff, with the town empty.

Barker laughed. "Reckon you ain't had a good look at my boatmen," he observed. "What's a few old pig-stickers good for against repeating rifles? Huh! And listen to me, my friend: Mabong's let that gold-dust yarn get spread around, ain't he? Never's contradicted it, far's *I* can find out. It makes him very important, don't it? Ha! Ha! Makes all the trucklers hunt him out, and so forth, and he gets himself took by moving picture people to be showed all over creation. Well, I'll take the bragging out of him! He'll think twice before he starts anything like this gold story again! I'll show him what fooling white men comes too."

"Barker!" pleaded Lansdell. "Let me take this girl out of harm's way! To my own *kampong*, I mean! I swear I won't go farther. I know you won't take anything from Mabong, because there isn't anything to take. But—"

The other man shook his head. "Sorry," he said. "But there ain't no need for you to go. Neither of you'll be in trouble if you stay where you're put and and do what you're told. And I don't like to spare you, Lansdell. You see, if there's trouble and anybody gets hurt, it 'll be handy to have a doctor along." He grinned.

Lansdell understood the hopelessness of appealing to him further. "Wray!" he said. "Won't you speak a word for Marcia? Surely you're not going back to the schooner and sail away, and all the time be hiding behind this girl's petticoats?"

Wray turned a stubborn face. "Exactly!" he answered hotly. "Why not? I tell you, I'm cleaned out. She's got plenty, but she doesn't care how I'm fixed. Never asks me if I need a couple of hundred. Never seems to think of my wants at all. It's enough if I get my expenses paid."

"She's just a girl," Lansdell argued.

"Yes, and that's why I can't ask her for money. Well, I'll fill my own pockets, and if she doesn't like it, I can't help it. Far as I'm concerned, I'd rather take something away from an old cannibal than be continually out of pocket and made to feel like a dog, or a little boy, or a porter."

Barker was already climbing to join the waiting crowd on the bank. "Come along, Ali," he called to the Malay leader; and from where Lansdell stood, dripping and wrathful, he could see Barker's hand come down to give the brown man help in making the few steps.

"Wray!" he implored again.

The older man looked pale, but he was as obdurate as ever. "The cards are dealt," he said. "The game is on. I'm going to play my hand, Lansdell." He nodded, and followed the Malay.

Lansdell had one last thing to tell him: "I'm glad of one thing. Your blood is not hers. She's not related to you and you can't disgrace her."

To that Wray made no reply, and a moment later his white-clad legs disappeared along the bank, going with scores of others—the trousered pair which was Barker's, the draped ones of the Malay and the bare, brown shanks of Dyaks of various ages and sizes—toward the other *praus*. Behind was left only Goboh, leaned against a pillar of that hut in the edge of the stream.

Lansdell, hands on hips, stayed where he was, staring at the bending bamboos under his feet. "They say you never know anybody well," he grumbled, "until you've gone camping with him. And this little jaunt into the woods has certainly made me understand our friend Wray." He looked at Goboh, who, with his deer-horn dirk and an automatic, was evidently the sentry on guard.

Lansdell addressed the man in his own tongue. "A brave man," he said, "does not conceal himself behind a woman's dress."

The Malay showed his black teeth appreciatively. "To catch a shark," he returned, "the two strange lords have baited the hook with a flower." And he nodded at the still figure in the boat.

It was then that Lansdell, for the first time, noted that the Chinese was no longer aboard the *prau*. As he turned to look about him, searching for the man, he heard a strange sound from the direction of the village. At first he could not make out what that sound was. But next knew it for a chorus of voices—voices old and piping, voices young and shrill.

The inhabitants of Moeara Koli were wailing.

He burst out in English: "What're those devils doing? And not a man at home to put up a fight!" He clenched his teeth and doubled his fists.

As if he understood what was in Lansdell's mind, the Malay answered: "All the strong are gone from Moeara Koli," he observed. "Two days more all such remain away and this excellent absence will prevent conflict." Then, sniffing the air with a turn of his scarlet-topped head. "After returning, doubtless," he added, with a sparkle in his dark eyes, "the forest men will have some building to do."

Lansdell understood. "Poor things!" he cried, again in English. "So that's what they're doing, is it? No wonder the people cry!" Now he, too, scented that new odor which was blowing down to them off the bank.

Almost at once his ears gave him added evidence of what was happening. Above that wailing, so persistent and heart-stirring, sounded a snapping and popping and whistling, accompanying a dull, hushing sound. The darkening sky overhead took on a sudden flush.

At least one of the long houses of the *kampong* was going up in flames.

CHAPTER VII.

UNDER MABONG'S HOUSE.

LANSDELL'S hands were tied, for he dared not leave the unconscious girl. He shook his head and smiled ruefully as he realized that in all probability Wray had foreseen just such a situation, and had, for that reason, urged the girl to follow Lansdell's suggestion.

"If anybody takes Uncle Chichester for a simple-hearted soul, he's wrong," Lansdell said to himself, and acknowledged he had been outplayed. "But what threw me off was the fact that I thought he was Marcia's uncle."

While there was still enough light, he hastily put his pistols in shape, going—Goboh at his heels—as far as his own *prau* to fetch oil and ammunition, after which he took the weapons apart, cleaned them and reassembled each pistol, the Malay watching with a half dubious air, but having no orders on this point, not quite daring to interfere, particularly as Lansdell completely ignored him.

It was dark when the girl awoke—with a start, as if coming out of a disquieting dream. "Philip!"—she knew the tall figure standing against the post of the house, and reached up for his hand to help steady her as she left the boat.

"Of course, they couldn't dig under Mabong's platform with any comfort," said Lansdell, trying to speak carelessly, "so they made the shortest possible end of the house by putting a match to it."

"Let us go up," was all she said, and followed the Malay along the little bridge to the steps in the bank, the Malay holding a lighted match close to her white-shod feet to guide them.

Lansdell followed closely. He did not consider any course now but one of passive disapproval, so far as the looting was concerned; because the safety and rescue of Marcia Oldham were his sole objectives. To take advantage of Goboh as he bent to make plain the steps of the white girl would be, as Lansdell knew, the height of foolishness.

"That's what Barker would love to have me do," he reflected; "lay myself open to being shot down." Without question the smiling, helpful steersman of Number One *prau* was not the only man on guard. Others were posted near, with ready rifles.

As the three came on a level with the *kampong* site, a strange scene met their eyes; and with Goboh beside them, Lansdell and Marcia stood hand in hand to view it. The clearing had at its center a cluster of smoking torches. These resinous bundles of leaves swayed in the hands of the Malays who were holding them above their head cloths, and the effect was that of a bed of great weird, wind-blown, night-blooming flowers.

In the dull flare dark figures were moving; not from side to side, but with a lengthening and shortening of each, as Barker's boatmen, stripped for their hot labor, swung high and low their pick-axes with a steady *thud! Thud! Thud! Thud!*

"Mining," said Lansdell, keeping his voice low. His right hand hung at his side, his fingers about the pistol butt, his thumb on the safety catch.

Forming a rectangle about workers and torch bearers were the tall, ironwood tree trunks upon which Mabong's house had been set. These had not burned, and only two or three seemed now to be smoking. Outside these had been shoveled the ashes of the fire, making a long, uneven hummock.

"I'll make up to these people for every thing they've lost," vowed the girl, her voice trembling with anger. "*He*"—the word was significantly emphasized; she did not mean to call Wray "Uncle" again—"said he needed money to gamble with. Well, these Dyaks shall have what *he* would have got. You'll tell them that, won't you, Philip?"

"This little affair isn't ended," Lansdell returned, "when the boats start downriver again. But, of course, you've seen the last of Wray. He'll go with Barker. I figure that we shall get safely away if no complications arise, granting, that is, that the captain of the Sabra isn't in on this."

"He isn't!" she declared. "Too many people know I'm aboard the schooner. No, that doesn't worry me."

"Those two aren't running any risks, are they?" asked Lansdell in an amused voice, for neither Barker nor Wray were in sight among the Malays. "Well, I didn't figure that either of them would dampen their white raiment going after pig or deer."

She exclaimed in disgust under her breath.

"You've had a hard blow," he said.

"I'm—I'm hurt," she admitted. "I—I can't really tell you *how* I feel."

"You don't have to. I know already by experience. There's nothing harder in this life to bear than a horrible disappointment in some one you've trusted. It's worse than losing them."

"Much, *much* worse!"

"That's what drove me to the jungle."

"I understand what you suffered now. And here these poor natives are being made to suffer! They've scattered to the woods—woman and babies and old men! Oh, my last bit of belief in—in—"

"And any respect or affection," Lansdell added. "Oh, I know how it's hit you. But he's not just weak, Marcia. He's bad. I thought that to-day when I saw him pot-shooting monkeys."

"A-a-a-a-h!" she breathed. "I loathed that, too! But what I think is so despicable—do you remember last night how, when I came out just before dinner, the way those two performed? Waiting on me and kissing my hand! Ugh!"

"But one disappointment," he soothed, "isn't the end of things, though I thought so when I left home. The old sting is all but gone for me, exactly as it 'll go for you. All I'm worried about now is your safety. I shan't breathe easy until you're out of this, and back on the Sabra. I'm sorry I couldn't get you away when you first went to sleep, but it wasn't possible without a fight, and I didn't dare run any chances of being killed or wounded, because that would have left you unprotected. For you and I can't count on Wray any more."

"Suppose I hadn't found you up this river!" she returned. "If the man who knew Dyaks had been some one else! Not a good man, but a rascal, just as they said!"

"Things don't seem to 'just happen' in this world sometimes," he said solemnly.

"But I feel that I've got you into this trouble!"

"I think it 'll turn out all right." His tone was reassuring. "They won't find anything, of course. That'll put 'em all in a bad temper. We must be careful not to crow over them, or say we told them so. The chap who'll suffer the most will be Wray, because he's even staked your friendship—and lost it."

"And you, Philip? Because I don't want to be safe if you're not."

"For your sake, Wray knows I'll never make him or Barker trouble. They'll spare me so I can see you safe aboard the Sabra."

"Leave Borneo and come home with me," she said pleadingly. "You will, won't you? Because I'd never rest easy after this. I mean, Barker's bound to be afraid of what you can tell and some day he might hire somebody to—to—"

"Put a poisoned spear into my back," Lansdell supplied. "Yes, I know that. Also, I'm not so sure that you don't need looking after until you set foot on American soil. And as I've had enough of the jungle for a while, I think I'll return on the steamer that carries you."

"I hoped you'd say that!"

For a few moments they stood without speaking. Then: "You don't feel any ill effect from your sleep, do you?"

"On the contrary. What was it you gave me, Philip? I meant to ask."

"It's a pellet I got from a Chinese doctor at Banjarmasin. I've never analyzed it, but I fancy it's an opium concoction of some sort. In fact, he said it was, but undoubtedly it has another ingredient, or is treated in some way that we haven't discovered. But it's been a handy medicine for my purpose. A patient sleeps and relaxes, and always wakes in better shape. It takes the place of a hypodermic."

They seated themselves on the hard ground, Goboh beside them, but a trifle to the rear. "Somehow," Lansdell went on, "I can't seem to realize what's going forward there. It's serious, and it's burglary, but it's all so matter of fact that the outrageous aspect of it isn't emphasized for some reason. I suppose because we haven't had any fighting. It's opposition that brings out a man's reactions."

"You've forgotten how things happen back home," she argued, smiling at him in the dark. "But I haven't, and I have the queerest feeling that any moment the police'll be turning up."

"Beyond the reach of the powers that be," he answered, "the jungle is a law unto itself."

That crowd of brown bodies among the templelike rows of black posts now suddenly varied their movements as the Malays who had been digging handed over their picks and shovels and took the flaring lights in exchange. Then a brief gabbling was silenced again, and the clumsy work, and the hollow-sounding *thud, thud, thud, thud* went on.

"Have you seen my China boy?" Marcia asked.

"When the trouble began," he answered, "about my taking you down stream, our faithful Celestial made himself scarce."

"Good! They won't dare to hurt us, but they wouldn't want a Chinaman to get away who knows about their looting. And I'd feel awful if they killed him."

"They'd do it," Lansdell agreed. "Come to think of it, I'll bet that Chink went under the platform—unless he's a part of this business, and an opium smoker is likely to do anything!"

"Philip," she said solemnly, "I dread the time when those Malays find they've broken

their backs and blistered their hands for nothing!"

Her hand was still in his. He turned toward her, half appealingly. "If they decide to hold you as a hostage," he told her, "until your order on the Sabra skipper brings whatever you've left in the schooner's strong box, don't be surprised."

"You mean ransom."

"I mention it as a possibility. The immediate future is veiled. Almost anything is likely to happen."

She gave a strange little laugh. "Well," she observed, "I came out with the idea of having an unusual experience, and it certainly seems that I'm having it!"

Once more they were silent, only watching and waiting. Now and then, as the torches were moved slightly and flared up, their light glinted on the metal of the rifles which were laying thickly between those high, black, ironwood shafts, scores of them, ready to hand. That invading host was prepared against any sudden attack.

"I'm so glad they didn't burn more than one house," Marcia observed. "This one won't be such a terrible loss, even if it is the head man's. But if all had gone—"

"Don't thank Barker," Lansdell replied half humorously. "Thank kind Fate that not a breath of wind was blowing through the *kampong*. And if all this mining doesn't pan out well, we may still see things happen in the burning line."

"I see. Out of revenge."

What happened next was the unexpected. At the center of the toiling figures, one of them suddenly straightened with a shrill cry, tossing down the implement in his hands and throwing up his arms. And in the instant that followed, with answering cries and a clanging of falling picks and shovels, the other workers leaped to the side of that first one, the torch bearers crowding with them.

"Gold!" exclaimed Lansdell. He sprang up, drawing Marcia to her feet. "By Heavens, I never dreamed they'd ever find any!"

The shrilling and the hubbub were so great that, in the forest behind them and to their left, they could hear the swishing of branches, as if drowsy birds, or staring monkeys, had become frightened and were taking themselves to more distant trees.

And Goboh was grumbling to himself, and shifting from side to side impatiently as he watched toward that cluster of men who seemed to have gone crazy at the sight of a find. Yet he dared not stir, for now two white-clad figures were running in the direction of the torches from under the nearest house. Amid a mixture of Malay and English, these two forced their way into the center of the shrieking boatmen, and Wray and Barker, laughing and shouting with the others, looked down on the first gold-filled jar which had been found.

Close on the arrival of the white men, there was more running, and the clamor was added to, also, as those Malays who had been stationed as sentinels in the darkness on every side came bounding forward into the uncertain light, hungry for a sight of the fabled dust and utterly forgetful of orders and danger.

Now was Lansdell's chance to get away into the forest and join some party of village women, who would help him hide Marcia until all trouble was past. Still holding that small hand in his own left, he pushed down the catch of his pistol—then turned his head a little, trying to locate Goboh.

On the site of the head man's house the wild shouting and jabbering and dancing was still going on, while the torches smoked as they were jerked about. Above the turmoil, Barker was trying to make himself heard, cursing and gesticulating as he urged his men to set to work once more. The noise of that triumphing was great enough to drown a pistol shot. And Barker's hands were full.

But Lansdell could not see the man who had been on guard. He spoke his name, knowing that he could not make himself heard. He stretched out the hand holding the automatic next, meaning to fire as the muzzle touched the body of the brown man. He found nothing within arm's reach. Then he dropped to a knee, peering to see if it were possible to make out the figure of the Malay against the sky. As he sank, he came down upon the foot of a man who was evidently stretched upon the ground.

The next moment, even as he drew Marcia swiftly aside, from all sides of the *kampong* there was a rush that was like the loud swooping of a flock of huge birds. Past him and the cowering girl sped feet that scarcely touched earth. Toward where the Malays still rejoiced like madmen, a thick barrier of black bodies built itself up.

"Dyaks!"

That dark, moving barrier closed in upon the cheering and unsuspecting Malays, blocking them from the guns laying upon the ground; as Lansdell put himself between Marcia and the ghastly struggle in that rectangle of dug up ground.

He urged her riverward, away from what was too awful for her eyes. He could not screen her from the bedlam that now broke loose—shouts, curses, shrieks, blows, groans. These were punctuated with a crackle of pistol shots as Wray and Barker, almost crushed by their own men, blindly exploded their weapons.

For a moment, above the carnage, the torches tossed, held by bearers who were too crowded even to draw their knives. Then the burning leaf bundles fell from the brown hands, scorching those upon whom they rested, or became wedged between the bodies of men, to be snuffed out, or trampled into the dirt and ashes.

Next, all was pitch darkness.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

LANSDELL and Marcia, hand in hand still, lost themselves in the blackness under the lee of the bank. Something barred their way, so that they struck against it, and Lansdell found that the object was a keg. Whispering, he placed the girl on it, then waded into the edge of the water, feeling about him for a *prau*.

He could not find one. Puzzled, and not wishing to leave Marcia alone a moment, he returned. From the *kampong* a dim, wavering light above the line of the bank told of torches relighted. The shouts that were going up now were all coming from Dyak throats. There had been a fierce turning of the tables.

"It's all right," declared Lansdell reassuringly. "The village men are in charge again."

She was trembling so violently that she could scarcely answer. "No! no!" she protested. "Let's get away!"

"But the Dyaks know me. I'll explain everything to them. And, Marcia, I couldn't find a boat."

She had risen. Behind them a light was advancing, and voices were rapidly nearing. That light now fell upon the inky level of the wide stream, and made clear the stretch of shore where the *praus* had come to a stop. And Lansdell saw that not one of the native craft was in sight.

A voice challenged them, and both turned their faces up to where the Dyaks were crowding. A dozen naked savages were staring down at them from under the torches they were holding aloft. Each Dyak had in his right hand the dirk or larger blade with which he had been slaying.

Marcia shuddered, shrinking against her companion. For that group above was a terrifying sight.

"Hither!" one of the Dyaks shouted, half facing toward those who were out of sight. "Others are here, seeking to escape!"

"No! no!" contradicted Lansdell. "Here is he who has many times medicined men from Moeara Koli. Look upon me!"

"Ya! ya! ya!"—the shouts were from Dyaks who were out of sight. As for the men peering down at Lansdell and the girl, they seemed dumfounded.

More light fell upon the scene as, with a trampling, other Dyaks joined that dozen, fetching additional torches with them. Then a chorus of astonishment went up. There was rage in that chorus; and the two who were looking up saw how distorted were the faces of those brown men upon whose homes and property and lives had been carried out a cruel and unprovoked assault.

Once more Lansdell addressed them: "It was the one whose skin is pitted who planned to rob."

From the group darted a man whose naked blade glistened wetly. Down he came to them, panting, and staring first at one, then at the other. Sweat and ashes

and hatred made his countenance singularly ferocious. He was like a cobra, ready to strike. Worn with his fight, he could not speak. But he lifted his weapon and shook it before Lansdell's eyes.

Marcia recoiled, and Lansdale went a step or two with her. "Where is Mabong?" he demanded. "I talk only to the rajah."

"*Aio!*" It was a cry of grief. And the men on the bank jostled and gestured.

"*Dead?*" demanded Lansdell, shocked and unbelieving.

"Look at me well!" cried the man who stood before him and the girl. "And remember back to a day of the last wet-season!"

Lansdell had not been able to make out the man's features clearly, especially as the torches were behind this Dyak who had come down to them. Now he stared. "Dukut!" he pronounced.

This man was not one of the first almost naked dozen. He was fully dressed, and even elaborately. A black satin jacket was worn over another of white cotton, the richer one being made, evidently, out of the cast-off dress of some white woman, for its sleeveless folds, held together at the front with large gold buttons of native make, were embellished with embroidery. Below the two jackets hung down a black *sarong*.

"Ya-a-a!" snarled the man, triumphantly. "And now the new rajah."

Lansdell spoke to Marcia. "This is rather bad luck," he said. "But, of course, we'll come out all right. This chap and I have had a run-in—last year, it was. He made mischief down at my *kampong*, and I had him soaped, and forcibly bathed, and his head shaved."

"He hates you," she answered.

Now Lansdell replied to the Dyak. "I remember," he said quietly. "I also remember that I gave ease and life to the father of Dukut when the aged suffered a snake-bite."

A second snarl, and a baring of black teeth; then, significantly, and with a sneer, "His highness likewise shall have ease, and for a long time."

It was a covert death threat.

Lansdell glanced down at the girl clinging to his arm. She had left her hat under the ogee roof of the *prau*. Her hair was rumpled, her light dress stained with dirt and bedraggled about the bottom. Her face was pitifully pale.

"Don't be so frightened," he begged of her. "One man isn't going to decide for the village. They'll all cool off by morning. Then they'll listen to reason."

Looking up past Dukut, he spoke to the group on the bank: "Are there not wounded who should be medicined?"

"Ya! ya!" was the answer.

"Come!" cried an old man. "For the red life runs from many even now."

Lansdell lifted a hand. "But if the stabbed are made well again," he bargained, "life must be spared."

The black eyes of Dukut glittered. "Assuredly," he replied, with a laugh.

"It is a pledge," Lansdell asserted, "and as such, is sacred. If it should fail of keeping, surely there shall come to pass many things that are evil."

"These have already come to pass," Dukut retorted, and gave a nod of the head.

The white man realized that nothing could be gained by staying to argue with his enemy. "A box must be come by," he explained in the Dyak tongue. "It is the box holding all that which tempers affliction."

He ordered a torch-bearer to join him; then, keeping Marcia at his side, went along the shore to where, piled neatly in one spot, were the contents of Number Six *prau*.

Other torches followed the first. Only now did the Dyaks see that the canoes were gone, leaving what was of far less value—the conical basket holding the fighting cocks, that keg on which the girl had sat, and some heaps of supplies. Cries of anger went up, mingled with exclamations of astonishment and inquiry.

"What hand loosed them?" was the demand that each native made of his fellows. As the stream was the only road by which the Malays could have escaped, surely no Malay had cut the boats free; on the other hand, the great, beautifully contrived canoes were such a prize to the men of Moeara Koli that certainly no Dyak had been guilty of sending them adrift.

"Ha-a-a-a!" answered the voice of Dukut, scornfully. "The hand that loosed them is the same hand which is so cunning with cures." And he laughed wisely.

Lansdell made a curt denial. Then finding his medicine and surgical kits, and giving them to a man to carry on ahead of him, he led Marcia up the bank to the level of the clearing.

"Young lady," he said cheerfully, "you and I are about to patch up some punctured Dyaks."

"Philip," she answered tremulously, "I don't believe that will save us!"

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed. "Things aren't so bad as you think."

A glance toward those upright, black pillars of Mabong's burned house, where a few figures were moving about, each with a lighted torch in hand, told Lansdale that the scene was more than ever unfit for the eyes of the girl. Many dark forms were stretched upon the ground. Not a few lay quiet. Others were moving—a head wagged, or an arm was tossed, or a knee was flexed in agony. There was plenty of work ahead for the white *dukun*.

Toward the left, standing close to the river, Lansdell remembered a house he had once visited. Abruptly he veered that way. "Fetch the hurt ones where water is close for bathing," he directed in Dyak.

Obediently the leading torches answered his order; and the company now hurried directly toward the spot upon which Lansdell and Marcia had sat to watch the digging, with the good-natured Malay, Goboh, at their back. When Lansdale saw that the men holding the torches were stepping over, or around, something which was in their path, quickly he put a hand over Marcia's eyes.

Barker's steersman was still stretched where a stealthy foe had struck him down. And one glance told the white man that he was right in foreseeing that a savage custom of the natives had already been carried out upon the dead.

Even to the trained surgeon the sight of his former guard was one to sicken. True to head-hunting proclivities, the victim had been decapitated; but not at the throat. Instead, a lazy villager had taken his prize by a skillful cut through the mouth, so that the lower jaw was still attached to the body.

Marcia whispered from under the hand that rested firmly over her face. "Is it—is it anybody we know?" she faltered.

"It is not," Lansdell managed to reply heartily. He uncovered her eyes then, and smiled down at her.

The voice of Dukut spoke at his other elbow. "The short instruments which send lead," he began; "these will not be needed in the curing of wounds."

Knowing that resistance was worse than useless, Lansdell thrust his pistol into the man's hand. "Fetch fresh mats," he commanded. "Also cotton cloth and vessels of clean water."

Dukut fell to the rear, making no reply. Just ahead was the house that Lansdell had had in mind, its platform spacious, and breast-high from the ground. He lifted Marcia to a seat on the edge of it, then climbed the notched timber which did duty for a ladder.

"Here's our receiving station," he announced.

Fortunately, there were neither native women nor children on hand to crowd about and get under foot. He ordered every Dyak from the flooring, peremptorily stationed torches in a circle about the platform, and sent men hurrying in various directions to bring what necessities were available. But the majority of the Dyaks ran off to where lay the dead and living victims of the battle, to fetch back the wounded.

While Lansdell rolled up his sleeves, Marcia, following out his directions, opened the bag holding his small stock of medicines and spread out the contents on a small mat. It helped to divert her thoughts from their predicament.

"There's relief in having something to do," she told him.

"And remember that we're going to win the gratitude of our friends here," he reminded her. "They're going to feel all right about us when they see us making a fight to save their men."

He opened a second bag holding his few instruments. But since white-rimmed black eyes were watching all these preparations

with a mixture of curiosity and awe, he displayed nothing more fearful than several rolls of absorbent cotton.

His back was to the girl. Suddenly, as he knelt, he heard her give a cry of joyous surprise. Whirling about, he saw that she was staring at something she held in her hand—a small, blackish object which was like a roll of paper. As he joined her, and took the find in his hand, he noted that the Dyaks who were watching showed sudden and unaccountable excitement, jabbering low to one another, their looks frightened.

He turned on them. "A-a-a-h!" he triumphed. "Upon this charm is fixed the shadows of the men of Moeara Koli!"

"Sir," implored one man, "does *my* shadow stand thereon?"

"The shadows of all stand upon this!" Lansdell replied. "Alas, if harm comes to it, not a house of the village shall stand! The dead will rise up! No orchard will give yield!"

The men murmured, slinking back a step or two, plainly apprehensive. While Lansdell, making a great show of what he was doing, took a leaf from a branch that was bending down toward the platform and wrapped in it that small roll.

"This *is* luck!" he told Marcia. "I know how superstitious they are! And I'll play this card for all it's worth!"

"You don't know how it made me feel to find it!" she answered. "Somehow I don't seem so far away from the world. Oh, Philip, to think that just a few days ago other people like ourselves were here, and got away all right!"

"Thank heaven," he laughed, "that they left behind them a sample of their celluloid film."

CHAPTER IX.

THE GONG.

NOW borne on stretchers, hastily contrived by laying a number of spears across two long paddles, the wounded began to arrive by twos and threes, and were placed on beds made of mats laid several deep. Some of the men were suffering tortures, though they uttered no complaints. For the relief of those, Lansdale brought out that scarlet-wound phial from Banjarmasin and administered a tiny, sleep-inducing pellet to those who were not unconscious. A few moments later, a long line of brown bodies—eleven in all—was resting free from pain despite the ugly knife-thrusts.

Assisted by the girl, who was evidently more reassured than formerly, Lansdell next proceeded from patient to patient, cleansing the wounds, medicating them, stanching the loss of blood, and binding, choosing the most dangerous cases first, and working as swiftly as possible.

"Are any of Barker's men among these?" Marcia asked him.

He shook his head, drawing his breath through his teeth in a mirthless laugh. "Barker's men are either safe in the jungle," he answered, "or else they're past doctoring."

Fires were being lighted in a circle about the platform, this for the driving away of mosquitoes and other troublesome insects. Lansdell requisitioned all netting from the long huts and the supplies at the landing place. This being hung in a swaying wall about the platform, the sick were soon guarded from the winged tormentors.

But those fires were not allowed to die down at once. About them, squatting, formed rings of Dyaks, each with a bamboo stick at the end of which was a bit of the flesh of a boar.

"The men of this village were out hunting, you see," Lansdell explained. "Barker's Malays knew that somehow or other, and took advantage of it."

"Philip," returned the girl, "do you notice how quiet the crowd is now?"

"Might be a party of college girls," he laughed, "toasting marshmallows!"

Strips of the boar's thick hide were cooked, and more than once this food was offered to the white man and the girl inside the mosquito bar. But neither would accept such tidbits, through lunch at the brief camp on the jungled shore of the river had afforded both their last taste of food.

Among those who were nearest the platform was Dukut. Every little while, between the wolfing of his meal, he turned

his face their way. He had a pinched nose, and narrow, cruel eyes. His jaws were sharp, and he seemed never to close his mouth, letting the long underlip hang down toward his pointed chin.

"He suggests a death's head," said Marcia, and shuddered.

"He's a bad actor, that," returned Lansdell. "As for the others, they've been terribly mistreated in all this. Think of it, Marcia! Men of our own race—men who've had every chance to know how to behave themselves—who've been raised on the peak of civilization—have wronged these simple savages, who've never had half a chance! Isn't it rotten!"

"It makes me ashamed," she declared.

She brought herself to the asking of that question which was uppermost in her mind. "And those two men," she said, her eyes fixed upon his face; "have they paid for what they've done?"

"We can't be very hopeful," he admitted. "They were at the very center of the trouble when it broke."

"But still you think that you and I—" She paused, unwilling to put the inquiry into words.

"I believe we're not in danger as long as we can help these men," he asserted. "And I intend to see that they don't convalesce too quickly. As long as my Chinese pellets hold out, I can keep some of them blissfully unconscious. That 'll give me a chance to tell the Dyaks that you and I didn't know about the game. What's more, we'll have friends on our side when the women come back."

But presently there was no denying that their situation looked less favorable. Leaving behind them only four men to light the platform with double that number of torches, the Dyaks filed away. A few returned to walk among those black, temple-like pillars. The others went aside to a nearby house.

Then a gong began to beat, its tones deep, clear, and ominous. The summons seemed to fill the clearing, as if the jungle walling the *kampong* confined the sounds.

At the first note of the gong Lansdell had turned quickly toward one of the wounded and knelt to make an examination. "Don't pay any attention to what's going on," he advised.

Already apprehensive once more, she had been seized with sudden weakness. Now she sat, the color gone out of her face, her hands trembling.

"What is happening?" she asked, her mouth so dry that she could scarcely speak.

"A council." He was still on his knees beside the Dyak.

The gongs ceased. The echoes of the finals beats went dying away upon the blackness which was the river, and against the forest-covered hills beyond.

In the first moment of welcome silence, a man who was holding one of the torches addressed the native standing closest to him. What he said was meant for Lansdell's ears, and the white man heard. Without looking toward the speaker he stood up.

She saw how white and drawn he was. "What did that man say?" she asked. "I know he said something that—that—"

"Nothing in particular,"—he made the answer as casual as possible.

"Philip," she went on solemnly, "I'd rather know the truth."

He tried to smile. "Very well, then, perhaps the truth would be best. This is what the man said: 'The giver of medicine has lived through many changes of season with our friends below, pretending to study the river people, pretending to be generous and kind, getting the gossip of that place, also of this, and only waiting for the day when his friends could come at his summoning to do murder and to thieve!'"

"They're going to kill us," she said huskily.

"I'm going to try to change their minds," he answered.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT LIES AHEAD?

THE Dyaks gathered upon a platform across the *kampong*. Lansdell kept his back toward them, as if indifferent to what was going on. But he could not ignore the pallid, shivering girl. He went to her, took both of her hands, and lifted her to her feet.

"If they kill us, Philip," she said to him, "how will they kill us?"

"What I want to talk to you about is a means of preventing them," he told her. From the pocket of his shirt he took that leaf-wrapped bit of film.

"I want you to hold this for me," he continued. "You know, a lot of these chaps don't like to have their pictures taken. They think it's bad luck. And I know how to make them sure of it. I want it where I can lay my hands on it at a second's notice—without the leaf."

She took it from him, but still persisted. "I think it's better for me to know what to expect," she faltered. "I'd rather not be taken by surprise. I have a dread—of that. Philip!"

"For us," he answered, "there will be only sleep."

"You mean the little pellets. Yes, that—that comforts me a little. We won't know what happens, or grieve at seeing each other hurt—or—or suffer." She lowered her chin to hide what was in her eyes.

His own eyes swam as he looked down at the bowed and rumpled head. "Marcia," he said tenderly, "you know, don't you, that you are my first thought? There *is* danger, of course. You want to know how things stand. Also, we've got a chance. And you won't forget, will you, that in the eyes of these brown fellows who are watching you, you're more than just an ordinary white girl? I've told them that you're as rich as the queen they've only heard about, and that you rule over an island longer than this river is long."

She lifted her head. "I shan't give up," she promised.

"That would hinder me a lot. Just now the one thing I'd like would be to see Barker coming in between a couple of Dyaks. And I'd go out and strangle him with my bare hands." He laughed.

"I'm at fault," she confessed. "You told me the whole thing was wrong. And you knew. But I wouldn't listen."

"I knew for several reasons," he returned. "In the first place, one good look at the Malays was enough. These days, you don't see the better class of Malays chewing betel."

"It's like you said," she went on. "A pit—do you remember what you said about that? They dug it, and they have gone into it, and we—you and I—"

"But the meeting over yonder may not have anything to do with us," he declared. "The point is this: The men of Moeara Koli know that the secret of the golddust is out. Some of the Malays must have got away, you see. Naturally the thing's got to be talked over. I suppose they'll decide exactly where the dust ought to go."

She had the curl of celluloid in a cup made of her two hands. "It's strange how I cling to this wisp of pictures," she said, with a little catch in her voice.

He lighted a cigarette and walked up and down, thinking hard of the problem before them, mentally rehearsing what he would say to their captors. "Maybe," he answered, "you have an inkling of what it can do for us. I'm going to play on the fears of this gang."

She turned the coiled film. Presently, as she straightened it out and held it between her own eyes and a torch, the Dyak holding the light shrank back as if frightened.

"Notice that?" asked Lansdell.

"There are shadows of *us* somewhere," she said sorrowfully. "Won't all our friends wonder at the queerness of it all! Philip, do you believe in another life?—or, perhaps, you don't want to tell me how you feel, because you might cast doubt on any faith of mine, and I'll need faith, won't I, if things go—go wrong?"

"I'll put it this way," he replied. "I shan't mislead you if I say that I *hope* it's all true. I'm not afraid to die, but I don't want to, even if life hasn't been any too sweet. Once I didn't care what happened to me—I was so miserable. I'd had the truth handed to me, and the truth seemed worse than death. Well, if there *is* a next life, and we're headed for it, that 'll be glorious, won't it? But if there isn't, then we'll have a good rest."

She nodded. "A lot of people think like that," she observed, and her voice was steady once more. "You see, don't you, that it's helped me, reasoning about it like this? But I haven't any doubts about the

next world. It seems quite close to me—always. It's been like that ever since I was a little girl. As if I could step across something, or, maybe, *through* something, and there I'll be! So, if the Dyaks free my soul from my body—"

"Don't!" he pleaded huskily. "I can't bear the thought, and as I'm going to fight to keep it from happening, we don't have to torture ourselves. So let's keep our minds off the idea."

"I don't agree," she answered. "Now, if ever, is the time to think of death, Philip. Of course, this is a strange place to come to our end in—this wilderness, among savages. I never thought it 'd be like this. But I suppose it doesn't really matter where the change happens."

He laughed, choking. "You're a wonder!" he declared. "The average girl'd be in a dead faint, or almost out of her head with fear. And here you are, calmly talking it over. I'll say you're a steady one!"

She shook her head. "Philip, I'm steady because I don't really believe—yet—that anything's going to—to hurt us. I can't even think that the—the others are—gone. My mind refuses to grasp it. Maybe I haven't lost hope, or I haven't got any imagination, or—or my brain is dulled." She put a hand to her forehead.

From a pocket he took two of those long, needlelike phials that were wound with scarlet paper. "Here!" he said. "Take one, Marcia, and sleep again."

"No." She straightened and backed a step. "No, Philip, thanks."

"Sleep the way you slept in the *prau*," he begged. "And trust me to—"

"Yes, leave everything to you," she said. "I won't do it. I'm not going to let you sit this out alone. If I keep my wits, I may be able to help."

"But it might help me more if I knew you weren't suffering—if I could bargain with free hands."

"No." She put up a hand. "Don't urge me. I did it before because I thought it would help to get you and uncle away. Now I don't see how it can help—if I don't get in your way, or take up your attention by falling ill. Your hands are free, Philip. Go ahead with any bargaining."

"Then do this: Take two of these pellets, and keep them in your left hand, where you can find them when you want them. Open your palm. Let me show you what I mean."

She obeyed, and he placed two of the tiny, black, seedlike globes on one of the lines of her moist palm. "Now, close your hand," he directed, "and you'll find the pellets will stay right where you've put them until they're brushed off. Don't take them unless I tell you, of course."

"I shan't." She shut her hand.

"I'll do the same," he declared, and placed two more of the dark globes in his own left palm.

"I do feel more—well, sort of reassured," she said, "having these here. Because, after all, maybe I'm not so afraid of dying. I think of father, and hope to go to him, you see. No, I'm not afraid of death. I'm just—just afraid of the *way* they'll take to—to kill me." Her chin trembled.

He could scarcely answer. "Pshaw!" he laughed, choking again. "They're not half as fierce as they look. They'll think twice before they do anything of the kind. They caught the others looting, you remember. I wasn't in on that. I can testify that the Dyaks were justified in what they did. You know, the authorities won't be slow in looking into this matter. That's what they're probably discussing right now. Just wait until I've put the business up to them straight."

"But don't—don't fight them," she begged. "I don't want them to get so angry that they'll take you, and leave me."

"Not by a good deal! Not a *chance!*"

"I'd hate that worse than death."

He patted her hands, smiling and leaning toward her. "You've got the medicine in your fist, haven't you?" he reminded. "Well, then, don't worry."

"But the medicine will only make me sleep for a while."

"Two of them will make you sleep for a good long while."

"I see." She opened her left hand again to look at the little grains, barely discernible in the murky light of the torches. "They must be powerful."

"Very. I've sent some home to a couple

of medicos for analysis. Of course, they never ought to be put on sale, or anything like that. They're too easy to take, and too pleasant a way of getting out of our jobs here on earth. But for a person who's in agony, they certainly are a God-send."

"I have the strangest thought," she said, looking up from her hand. "Uncle and Barker—if they're gone, they haven't had anything said for them, have they? I mean prayers. It doesn't seem right."

"We can remedy that. You won't let that worry you, will you?" He closed that left hand of hers and held it again in both of his.

"No," she answered. "Only I was thinking that if we go—"

"Don't, Marcia!"

"I'm not breaking down, Philip. But it would be strange, to go out here in the jungle, and not have anything said, or read." She looked at him wonderingly.

"Dear little woman, what would it matter?" he asked. "Besides, we're not going to go out. So just set your mind at rest."

On that platform where the Dyaks were in council, there was now a stir, as the circle of natives rose with a bobbing of torches and descended to the ground.

"They're coming this way," Marcia announced.

Without turning to look, Lansdell, keeping the girl beside him, went to the first Dyak on the left of the line of wounded, examined him, then proceeded along the mats, ostentatiously taking the pulse of each.

The tramping of sandaled feet came near. The platform was lighted by a score of smoking torches. But not a word was spoken as those Dyaks who had been in conference came to stand against the edge of the flooring, looking up at the white *dukun* and his companion.

"Excellent!"—it was Dukut speaking in his own tongue. He nodded at Lansdell.

"All rest without agony," replied the latter. "All mend fast." Then pointing down at one of the older men, "What is thought of such power? I ask of him who wears a sword at his side."

The savage gestured solemnly. "It is most surely magic!"

Lansdell grunted. "Magic, yes. But it is child's work compared with what other wonders the white men who understand medicine can do. Huh! It is, indeed, little."

Now Dukut was speaking, smoothly, his betel-reddened lips twisted in a sneer. "So the white worker of magic understands greater magic," he observed. "That is good fortune—for him."

Lansdell half whirled about to glare at him, pointing again, his face suddenly hardening with anger. "Be fearful of that magic!" he warned. "Lest great ill-doing comes upon Moeara Koli!"

Dukut shrugged. "A challenge," he remarked carelessly. "Then let us see how great a value is the saying through which blows so great a wind." And he laughed.

Marcia saw the look on that cruel face upraised to Lansdell's. She gripped the arm of the latter. "Philip," she quavered, "they've come for us!"

"No! *No!* They don't *dare!*" His voice rose piercingly. "They'll be cleaned out if they harm us! They know it! The Dutch'll make them pay!"

Dukut spoke again, slowly, quietly, using only a few words.

These brought a furious, impassioned reply from Lansdell. He faced, now this way, and now that, as he spoke, painting the wrath of the authorities, charging Barker and Wray with the plot, pointing out that, rich as the young white woman was, she could not possibly need to rob them; and he ended by making them a promise of a rich reward.

Once more it was Dukut who answered: "Moeara Koli has no further need of gold. Moeara Koli has much gold."

Lansdell bent toward that older man with the sword. "It is not just treatment, not generous treatment, that the men of Moeara Koli desire," he asserted. "It is only revenge for this one." He pointed at Dukut.

The Death's-head replied: "What must be done, must be done. Doubtless some of the Malay robbers went free. These will tell of the buried gold—as always. No man will believe. But if a white man tells—"

Lansdell's heart sickened. He knew the matter was already settled. No plea, no abuse, no threat could swerve these men of the village from their purpose. He could only depend now upon fear.

Marcia sensed then that their situation was more than desperate. Suddenly weak, and terribly white, she clung to him. "Philip! Don't let them strike me!"

He tried to comfort her as he would have comforted a child. "Of course I shan't. There, there, Marcia! Dear, little woman, they shan't touch you. You've got the medicine, haven't you?"

She stared round, her face quivering with terror, so that she scarcely looked like the Marcia of a short ten minutes before. "What are they going to do to us? What are they going to *do?*"

He put his arm about her and urged her forward a step. "They tell us to get down," he answered. "I think it best for us to do what they ask. You have that medicine. Don't take it until the last hope is gone. But I haven't given up yet. I'll use that film."

He sprang down and lifted her to his side. Now that the Dyaks were all about them, her terror increased, and she moaned as she clung to him. He held her up, trying to comfort her. He turned her face toward his, to take her eyes from the faces of the Dyaks.

The latter urged them away from the platform. There was no laughter and no jeering. All of those dark countenances were strangely solemn. And even Lansdell, though he could scarcely give a thought from the terrified girl at his side, knew that what was about to take place did not meet with the enthusiasm of all the men of the *kampong*. Some whispered. Others were clutching charms. On the outskirts of the crowd a few ran to and fro as if they were nervously consulting.

But the head that had been soaped and shaved was held high and confidently. Dukut walked along beside Lansdell with a swagger, and smoked.

"What lies ahead?" asked the white man, not letting his eyes fall to the dirk in the twist of his enemy's *sarong*.

Dukut's black eyes sparkled. "What should lie ahead," he answered, "save the river?"

CHAPTER XI.

THE MIRACLE.

WITH torches bobbing about them, and surrounded on every side, the two captives moved forward as slowly as Lansdell could manage it, for he still had a hope of moving some of the older men among the Dyaks to a reconsidering of their decision, or to a postponement.

"Be sure the omens are right!" he warned. "Also have a care that the spirits of powerful white men do not forever torment Moeara Koli with sickness, since a man who heals is to be put to death!"

A few murmured at this, and would have halted to consult upon the threats, but Dukut loudly protested, shoving at Lansdell rudely. Raging within, the latter dared not strike back. No chance of fighting his way out yet offered itself, especially with a half-fainting girl leaning her weight upon his arm.

"They mean to kill us both!" she cried to him, and her voice was not like the voice he knew, but strained and hoarse.

He found her right hand, took from it the small stiff roll of celluloid, and addressed the Dyaks. "Men of Moeara Koli," he said, "are you ready to see magic?"

At that, a few fell away from him, jabbering as if frightened.

"Think carefully," he told them. "Is it not better to send away the two who are not guilty, rather than that some of your own shall have to suffer the fate of their shadows?"

They understood then what he meant. And those who had permitted themselves to be photographed began to cry out, and drew to a distance, now arguing among themselves, now shouting a warning to those who hemmed in the captives.

A young Dyak whose ornaments and tattooing showed him to be of some rank now answered the white man. "My brothers

can judge best," he pointed out, "when they know how their shadows shall fare."

There was a click of Lansdell's cigarette-lighter, the shooting up of the tiny flame, then an almost explosive flash.

"Thus!" replied Lansdell. "By fire!" And heard the sound of running feet as, terror-stricken, those men who had left the group now fled at top speed.

Dukut laughed. "No shadow was destroyed," he asserted calmly. "Even as my brothers ran, ran their shadows along at their side. I saw." He gave Lansdell a shove riverward.

The white man trembled with rage. "I may go down," he said in English, "but I'll take this rascal with me!"

"Philip, don't quarrel with them any more," she pleaded. "If you make them angry, they're likely to—to do terrible things."

They moved on, and as they went the Dyaks about them still kept up their arguing. "I saw no shadow run away," vowed one man. "The shadows all were burned." And a second man replied: "How can this man and this woman do us harm with fire after they go down into the water?"

"That shall be soon seen," Lansdell retorted boldly.

But he was at his wits' end, and torn with pity for the half-fainting girl beside him. It came over him that the kindest service he could do for her would be to put out her life on the spot.

"This is the cruelest thing!" he mourned. "I'd give my own life to save you!"

Then groaning out in anguish, suddenly he caught her to him, wrapping his arms about her, holding her close. It was not the embrace of a lover, neither was it a brother's embrace. He yearned to comfort her, and he was putting himself between her and her tormentors.

"Marcia," he soothed, "I'm going with you—right through the door itself! I'll be with you every second. Every second!"

Clinging to him, she laid her face in the hollow of his shoulder. "I've given up," she sobbed. She was like a child again, pillowing her head while she wailed out her utter misery.

Unmanned by her suffering, and unashamed, he also wept. "Now! now!" he said chokingly, pressing her wet cheek against her own. "You'll sleep before the water touches you, blessed little woman!"

They forgot that scores of eyes were watching. But the Dyaks waited through that farewell more than patiently; they were keenly interested. To them, the heartrending scene was pure entertainment. As they stared, they whispered, exchanging opinions on the odd conduct of the white people. There was no grinning, however; neither was there pity, though all were grave.

Dukut spoke: "Let his eyes flow with water, since he prizes water highly. Yes, let him rain down eye-water, for are not the women and the little ones of Moeara Koli out in the forest even now, hiding for their lives?"

"Our forefathers came up this river riding upon fishes," boasted one man. "Surely, then, the great lady at least came down from heaven to earth."

Lansdell lifted his head. "The great lady goes from earth to heaven," he said, and prayed that he was speaking the truth.

Without a trace of mockery the man continued, staring at the two, big-eyed. "But with much regret," he pointed out.

Lansdell gave a bitter laugh. "Ah, that's it!" he said to the trembling girl. "They think we're scared, Marcia. Are we, poor little girl? Shall we take our medicine now?"

At that, she straightened, and stood upon her own feet without help. "I can bear it," she whispered. "You come with me. And, Philip, could—could you say something before they—they—? I mean a prayer."

Now he laughed wildly. "I feel more like killing than praying! I could run amuck if I wasn't helpless. I'd show 'em!"

"I—I know a Psalm," she said brokenly. "I—I think I'll say it. We can't go as if we were animals."

He put his arm about her. "Say it, dear! Say it!" he begged.

They went forward slowly, and her voice began quaveringly: "*The heavens declare*

the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech—"

Her voice had grown more firm: her face was raised now to the dark, almost starless sky. It was as if she were listening to her own words, and they held her. She walked with a surer step, Lansdell noted. Her hands were clasped against her breast.

"*Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun.*"

The Dyaks scarcely breathed. Some of them were plainly nervous, and were holding back irresolutely. Noting the silence, Lansdell lifted his eyes and saw how they were lagging, and that there were signs of weakening.

"Go on, Marcia!" he urged. "They don't like it! It's scaring them! Go on! Say it over if you can't remember the rest!"

"It's our own service," she answered quaveringly. "Think of it! I don't remember it right, Philip! "*His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and His circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof—*"

A hand suddenly dragged at Lansdell, stopping him. But though the girl came to a standstill beside him, she went on with the Psalm, her voice steadier and louder: "*The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold—*"

The first surge of her terror seemed to be gone. Yet the very strength she was showing unnerved Lansdell. He seemed uncertain on his feet, and swayed groggily. Staring down at her, in the next half-minute he seemed to be two men, and the one talked with the other:

"Sickness isn't pleasant either, Lansdell —fever and things of that kind. They're all rotten to go through with." And he answered: "Yes, and heaven will be all the happier for having such a young and lovely creature. She'll sleep and never know a thing. Even water isn't the worst route." That inner voice went on again: "But be sure that she goes first." Lansdell laughed at that. "Don't have to remind *me*," he declared.

That spasm of something which was like delirium passed. What the Dyaks were halted for, he had not looked to see. He stared down at her, his throat aching, his breath stifled, his heart sick within him.

But she was continuing the Psalm: "*Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins: let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent—*"

It came from behind them, and from the farther side of the village. It came as suddenly as a flash of lightning; and like lightning, for one terrifying moment, it drove the darkness from the *kampong* and the river. It was a great flash of fire that went tree-high, and with a mighty sucking breath.

Rising with it went a scream. That scream mingled the voices of the Dyaks with the voices of their women and children, these last far and faint, out of jungle hiding places. And Lansdell's voice swelled the chorus, joyously, for he guessed that either Barker or Wray, or both, were still alive and were helping.

"Ha-a-a-a!" he shouted at the Dyaks. "Did I not say it? All shall perish by flame as perished their shadows! Ha-a-a! A wonder charm!" And to the girl, bending down to her, "Go on! They think the film worked! Talk, Marcia! Talk! They think you're a sorceress! That it's all incantations!"

As she continued, they found themselves standing quite alone, for at that flash the Dyaks had darted aside with the swiftness of so many brown monkeys, striking against one another in their consternation, and concluding their first yells with a wild gabbling.

Every dark face was anxious. The torches trembled in the hands of the bearers. Fingers pointed shakingly at them. Guttural voices uttered husky warnings.

"Go on! Go on!" Lansdell shouted. "Marcia, they're ready to bolt!" Fiercely he turned on the crowd. "This comes of a broken pledge!" he cried. "The spirits help us! Here is the answer to a strong

charm! Here! Look upon a mighty sorceress!"

Shouting with triumph, he pointed down at the girl. "Magic! And all shall see greater magic! Come down to the water! There await other spirits of fire!"

But with cold shivers traveling his spine, he asked himself, "*Is* the miraculous working for us? Is it *possible?* Oh, but it *can't* be!"

That flash had been so like his burning of the coil of celluloid, only many hundred times multiplied. "And I threatened them with fire!" he remembered. "How *could* it happen just the way I said it would!"

He saw then why their progress had been so unaccountably halted. Toward the group, running fast beside a native who was carrying a torch, was coming a strange and horrible creature whom Lansdell recognized as a famous priestess. Old, and skinny; shorn of her eyebrows; tattooed in blue scrolls on thighs and hands and feet; her hair cut short and her mouth toothless, she looked her rôle of witch.

Lansdell greeted her with laughter, knowing it was his best weapon. "The old lady is exorcising us!" he cried, for now she was circling the intended victims, murmuring and posturing as she went. "She's pitting her spirits against ours!"

And to Dukut, standing closest of all, but shifting and recoiling, and seemingly not a little shaken in his resolution to go on with the drowning, "Let your brown-skinned old devil dance! In the blackness behind the village, we have demons of our own! Wait! Wait! You shall see!"

He shook the sweat from his face, his tall figure towering above the short forest men about him like some avenging giant. "Barker!" he shouted. "Wray, is it you? Go on! Go *on!* Give us another one!"

A sudden fury seemed to seize the new *rajah.* With so much delay, and with hidden forces opposing the execution, he saw his hated enemy daring the most feared of his tribe. Cursing, he threw himself at the white man, shoving him riverward fiercely.

"It is thieves who work in the jungle!" he shouted to his men. "Not spirits! Come! Do not fear!"

Lansdell drew Marcia along with him. She went like a sleep-walker, staring ahead dully, tottering a little, and whispering to herself.

"This woman is the true sorceress!" declared Lansdell. "Loose her spirit out of her body and she will avenge us both! Sickness and death shall empty your houses! And the flame that shoots skyward shall consume them!"

The old woman left behind, the few who were brave enough to help Dukut with the execution now pushed at the two victims with their spears and paddles, while their bangles jangled, and they kept up a great gabbling. Behind, the torches danced in hands that trembled, and each man called upon his own spirits, holding up bits or wood, or stones wrapped in rags and leaves. Lansdell was like a wild man. He knew that the width of the shore divided safety from death. What must be done was the impressing—again—of a superstitious terror upon the already frightened horde.

"Go on, Marcia!" he entreated. "Talk! Talk! Barker got away! Or Wray! Marcia, they're trying to save us!"

She shook her head. "I—I can't remember," she answered, so low that he could not hear. "I can't remember. It's gone. All gone."

Lansdell, his streaming face raised to the sky, one arm revolving crazily, went on with his shouting: "This is our *chance!* They think we brought on the fire!" Then, invoking the elements, "Oh, for a tornado! For a storm to wash the whole cursed lot into Kingdom Come! Come on, boys! Come on, I tell you! They're ready to jump! Give us some more your sheet-lightning!"

The torches lighted a narrow zone of black water. Next, with a great splashing, the dozen or more of that advancing group went into the edge of the stream. For a moment, Lansdell was torn from the side of his companion, but fought his way back to her, crying out like an animal, whirling, dodging blows and thrusts, knocking down the dark hands that were reaching to clutch the two and press them under the churning current.

There were scarcely ten seconds of this battle, a battle in which the Dyaks were at

a disadvantage, owing to the fact that they struck one another as often as they struck their prisoners, for Lansdell was going like a shuttle among them. Then Marcia was down, her light dress billowing on the surface of the stream.

He was beside her before he knew what had felled him. Choking and strangling, he still fought for his life and hers. Seeing the drowning all but accomplished, those Dyaks who had hung back in fear now came swarming down the bank, cheering on the few gathered about the struggling victims.

A very bedlam of triumph arose then: "Gubu! Gubu! Gubu is the great sorceress!"

But now another weird and inexplicable happening: From a point only a rod or two down-river, of a sudden a wide sheet of flame went forestward, once more lighting the houses, the clearing where the dead lay, the roofing sky, the wall of the jungle; it circled the *kampong* with a twisting, serpentlike motion, and made, as it darted at lightning speed, the sound of a long, suckling breath—*shoo-oo-oosh!*

As an unearthly glow lit the scene, all those red-lipped black mouths of the Dyaks gaped and moaned, and their rolling eyes stood out upon their cheeks in horror as they saw the very heavens swept by a mammoth brush.

Shrieking, like one they faced in the only direction that seemed free of the fire—the river; paddles, spears, and torches fell upon the stream out of the hands that held them; and as Lansdell caught up the half-drowned girl, the last light spluttered out, hiding from sight the bobbing heads of the swimmers.

Lansdell wasted no breath in exulting. The dripping weight in his arms was almost more than he could carry. Gasping for breath, he staggered along the bank to where that rushing path of fire had had its beginning.

As he charged blindly through the blackness, just ahead of him a rifle began a steady *pop-pop-pop-pop-popping*—at which there sounded a chorus of gurgling cries from out in the stream. And out of the jungle beyond the stream, terrified monkeys, roused by all the tumult of the struggle and by the flames, sent up a hideous screaming and chattering.

CHAPTER XII.

KWONG'S MENTOR.

AS that *prau* which was furnished with the ogee roof made its way swiftly down the wide, yellow water-route, though the first light of dawn had not yet come, Lansdell, sitting forward and peering toward the stern of the craft, could just dimly see the figure of the steersman at it showed above the top of the gracefully bending roof.

The paddle in the hands of the man made a dark line at his side. The end of his cigarette was a round, red spot which grew or became small with the regular breath of the smoker.

His clothes dripping into the bottom of the canoe, his body sore with the pounding he had received at the hands of the Dyaks, Lansdell grinned at that steersman, recalling how, as he had carried the unconscious girl along the bank he had stumbled against the body of a man, had dropped his burden to clutch the throat of a supposed enemy, who was already seizing him, and had found in his hands—a queue!

Now, out in the middle of the water-road, the *prau*, skillfully directed, was traveling like a live thing that feared pursuit, swaying a little from side to side as it sped, so that the end of the cigarette at the stern now and again described various spirals and circles, as Kwong Wing leaned this way and that, balancing himself where he stood.

The rushing canoe seemed to be carrying its load into the dawn. For soon Lansdell could see the Chinese more clearly—the smooth, round face with shadowed hollows for eyes; the padded jacket worn against the cool of the night, the freshly lighted cigarette back from which, over a shoulder where that queue hung down, floated a thin wisp of smoke, like a bit of light-blue gauze.

Presently Lansdell could see the other occupant of the *prau* more clearly. Under

the little roof lay a mat-covered figure in an exhausted heap. The face was streaked with dirt and tears and threads of still-wet hair. One thin, uncovered hand was fast clenched.

At sight of that hand, Lansdell cautiously went forward to his knees, opened the hand gently, and picked away two tiny, black spots which stood out on the fair skin.

Marcia moved her head, murmuring.

"It's all right," he said soothingly. When he had dipped a palm-full of water from overside and washed the place where the tiny pellets had rested, he went back carefully to his place in the *prau*.

He returned the two pellets to a phial from which the red paper was hanging loosely.

"Thank Heaven she didn't remember to take them!" he said aloud.

Again she moved. "Philip," she whispered.

"I'm here. You go to sleep. I just remembered that you had the medicine, and it wasn't the same kind that I gave you before the fight."

"We're—all—right," she answered sleepily.

He drew a long breath of thankfulness. But for his own torn and mud-stained clothes, the figures of his companions and the hurrying boat, he would have said that he had just awakened from an ugly dream.

He looked across the little roof at the Chinese outlined against the lead-colored sky.

"Kwong," he said solemnly, "the way you used those kegs of powder would shame the Royal Engineers!"

That full, yellow countenance divided in a grin, and the man's black eyes rested proudly on the face turned up toward his. But he only nodded, his queue, which was partly unbraided, and blowing in the wind made by the swift passage of the boat, going up and down on his breast.

"The keg that went off first," went on Lansdell, laughing, "took that crowd off their feet. It scared 'em good and plenty, Kwong, and got 'em ripe for that final stunt. And the way it all fitted in! Well, I'll say it was perfect teamwork!"

Kwong gave another quick bob of his disordered top-knot, with its scalp shaven in the old-fashioned manner. "Mister," he said, "if I don't got plenty—plenty time for make how-you-call of powder on ground, no can do."

"Time!" returned Lansdell. "I understand. Every delay was luck!"

"Mister," Kwong went on, in a sort of sing-song, "I say to me like this: 'I don't can give all them Dyak devil one good shot for each. So. Better if I make for all a *big* blow-up—maybe two.'"

"Some idea!" agreed Lansdell.

"Yes, I do that idea out"—it was said happily, with a showing of all those yellow teeth in a smile that entirely shut from sight the keen, liquidly shining eyes. "Also, after I have give Goboh one good choke, I make the cut-off of them boats, so all Dyak don't come after."

"Kwong"—Lansdell spread out his arms to take in all that life offered to them just then: A white heron flying overhead; the blue roof of the river; the peaceful, rapid-flowing route down which they were going; the bending, flower-hung jungle which was already laying its green reflection on the water; the musical voices of unseen birds; "—Kwong, how'll we ever to able to make it up to you for what you've done! And if I'm not mistaken, it was you, too, wasn't it, that wrote me a letter?"

A bow, while the Chinese reached one hand to a hip-pocket under the tails of the padded jacket. "Mister," he replied, "I can make talk on paper more better than with mouth. So. I got glad feel to tell you how you have much welcome, please, to that respec'ful letter which I have achieve."

He bent forward to toss to Lansdell, across the curving roof of the boat, a small and well-thumbed book. And the surprised and delighted white man in the front of the *prau*, glancing at the cover of that volume, read its title:

A MANUAL OF POLITE CORRESPONDENCE
For the Instruction of Ladies and Gentlemen

THE END

In the Event of Death

By LAURIE YORK ERSKINE

Author of "The Laughing Rider," "The Confidence Man," etc.

WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN PART I

BRADLEY COSGROVE, after obtaining a law education in the East, returns to Manford in the cattle country, and falls under black suspicion. Mason Farley, one-time enemy of Cosgrove's father, is found murdered. His will leaves the ranch to his brother, Wert; Klien, the foreman, and Cliff Lederer, a protégé of the deceased. Hazel Farley, the daughter, is to inherit in the event of death of the coheirs. Cosgrove becomes her attorney, although he is warned by John Gaines, his rancher friend, that the three men are deadly enemies. Lederer draws against Cosgrove, and is shot in the arm. Klien tries to sneak a shot, but is slain. Farley makes it appear that Cosgrove killed an unarmed man. Cosgrove is jailed for trial by jury, the first time in Manford's history where Judge Lynch long has reigned. Hazel asks her uncle to go bond with her for Cosgrove. He taunts her with the fact that Lederer is coheir and hates Cosgrove.

CHAPTER XII

ENEMY BAIL.

THE entrance of Cliff Lederer achieved the effect Wert Farley had hoped for, because in him Hazel recognized an enemy. He had been arrayed against her ever since she first shrank from his bold, appraising glances in her girlhood. She had discovered this morning that she could control Farley and subdue him. She had learned long since that she abhorred and feared Lederer.

"We just wanted to hear yore opinion of a business deal," drawled Farley, his eyes on the girl.

Before she could frame an answer Gaines threw open the door of the front room.

"We'd like it if you came in here now, Wert," he said coldly.

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for March 28.

Farley grinned at Hazel and moved toward the door.

"You'll excuse me?" he leered.

She felt that she could not bear being left alone with Lederer—an unreasonable dread which she could not understand.

"No—wait!" she cried.

But, Farley had already disappeared through the doorway.

"What business?" asked Lederer. He smiled at her boldly. She examined him with a swift glance, and, recalling the wound which Cosgrove had inflicted upon him, wondered at her fear.

"Your business," she said firmly. "I'm planning to use my share in this ranch to raise bail for Mr. Cosgrove."

His practiced smirk, proved irresistible by past conquests, changed ludicrously to a frown of mystification.

"Bail?" he asked. "Your share? What you talkin' about?"

And she remembered that he was ignorant of all that had passed since his duel with Cosgrove.

"Klien is dead," she said. "Mr. Cosgrove shot him in fair fight. My uncle is playing foul against him."

And even as she spoke, her spirit was overcome with the realization that Cosgrove had no enemy who hated him more bitterly than this swarthy cow-puncher. "He has put him in jail," she added.

In a flash Lederer achieved understanding. He turned from her as a thing of no importance, and burst noisily into the front room, where Christofferson was clumsily questioning Farley.

"What's this, Wert?" he roared. "What is this about Klien being shot?" He drew up short before the body which they had placed on the table in the middle of the room.

"Drilled clean!" Farley murmured, with a technical interest in the wound.

"Yeah, an' Jake without no gun. They are holdin' Cosgrove fer murder!"

"They're holding him for the findings of the sheriff and coroner," snapped Gaines.

Lederer's eyes gleamed with an evil fire. "That boy's certainly notchin' up his gun a lot," he remarked. "First, Mase Farley, then me, then Jake."

"What's that?" asked Christofferson.

"Nothing that concerns you, Chris," said Gaines. "It ain't evidence."

"Oh, ain't it?" Cliff laughed. He was in a mood of reckless triumph. "It's evidence enough to hang him. Chris, this lady here, she's all worked up about bail and such. He fixed it, this Cosgrove did, so she comes into Jake's share of the ranch, an' she's rightly grateful."

He smiled with glistening teeth at Hazel. "But if you let that snake-blooded skunk out on bail, yo're missin' the best chance you ever had of hangin' onto the man who shot Mase Farley in the back." He turned to Hazel. "That's how favorable I am to bailin' him out," he said genially.

"But you will in the end!" she cried; and she suddenly felt that she was an equal for this man—that he had no power over her. "When he is free, as you are afraid to make him free to fight for himself, you'll remember what I'm saying now. You have seen in Bradley Cosgrove the form and substance of a gentleman such as you can never understand. You challenged him to try your own game, and he beat you at it.

"He was too contemptuous of you to shoot you dead as you would have shot him. So he just winged you, and humiliated you. I should think you'd be ashamed to stand there and play your heroics in the face of the mark he's put on you.

"And you hope to keep him behind bars by *your* efforts! You might as well try to imprison the wind. And when you speak of fighting him with the law, you challenge him to meet you at his own game; and he'll beat you worse than he did before."

Her voice stopped, leaving them silent—leaving Lederer without a word he dared to speak. She turned to Gaines. "Have you finished here, Mr. Gaines?"

Gaines looked from Farley to Christofferson with an amused twinkle in his eye. "Yes," he said gravely, "we've finished. You can cart Jake Klien over to the coroner, Chris, and then you let the law take its course," he advised.

"Drive me into town," the girl requested.

"Whenever you say," agreed Gaines.

As she approached the door, Lederer strode forward and grasped her roughly by an arm with his free hand.

"Where are you goin'?" he demanded.

She freed herself with a gesture of defiance.

"I'm going to see that justice is done!" she cried. "I'm going to bring the authorities of this county to life, and the first thing they'll do will be to turn Bradley Cosgrove free."

Lederer said nothing more as she followed Gaines from the room, and he said nothing until the sound of Gaines's car announced their departure. Then he addressed Farley hotly, as though a flood of poisonous anger found vent in his words.

"He'll be turned free!" he cried thickly. "That girl is mine—she belongs to me! An' he's buttin' in. Well, he'll get the works!"

Farley, grinning, interrupted him.

"He's all roped an' hog-tied for the killin'," he said.

But Lederer's wild words would not be stemmed.

"We'll free him from jail! In the night we'll free him, an' we'll make him dance on the air!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A LENIENT JUDGE.

AFTER the arrest of Bradley Cosgrove came the discovery by the people of Manford that they had a resentment. And this resentment was fed and developed by rumor in the mouths of all who listened to Wert Farley, Cliff Lederer, and their associates, and "fact" as set forth in the Manford *Argus*. The demise of Jacob Klien was described with reportorial avidity. The front page howled with the details of the "crime," and there was not lacking an editorial which indignantly denounced the outlander who came to this peaceful community to slay his fellow men in unseemly brawls and, it was darkly hinted, to avenge the financial failure of his father by shooting honored citizens in the back.

Public opinion rebelled at this "outrage" and forgot the complaisance with which they had regarded like tragedies of the past. Nurtured by the excited editor of the *Argus*, and propagated by Farley and Lederer, the town of Manford indulged in an orgy of indignation. Unconsciously, the community used Cosgrove's arrest as an outlet for its resentment against all that made life precarious; it was a resentment which had been long pent up.

It was due as much to this as to his desire to please Wert Farley, whose political sway had placed him on the bench, that Judge Pete Fairlove refused the plea of John Gaines to release Cosgrove on bail. He stated portentously that in view of the popular opinion he thought it not safe to turn the prisoner free. Gaines, who had assured Hazel Farley that to free Cosgrove would be a mere formality, returned to her with this verdict.

The following morning was set for the date of examination, and the two friends went to visit the prisoner at the jail. They found him playing jackstraws with Christofferson's seven-year-old Sylvia, and he arose from the floor apologetically.

"But we'll finish our game just as soon as the first inning of this other one is over," he assured her.

"What's it called?" she asked doubtfully.

"Cops and robbers," he answered gayly. "How do you do, Miss Farley?"

"They're going to hold you without bail," she said, coming to the point immediately. "Have you seen the paper this morning?"

"Yes," he smiled. "I must talk to the editor about a job. He needs a good reporter and an editorial writer. It doesn't matter about the bail, Miss Farley—not yet. We'll have to put in a formal plea at this examination."

"What's it for?" she asked gravely.

"Just so the judge can review the case and decide whether it ought to be tried or not. How is little Clifford's arm?"

Gaines had been regarding him gravely. "Lederer's gunnin' for you, Brad," he said. "Seems to me this jail here's as safe a place as any for you."

At that the smile left Cosgrove's face. He gazed at Gaines with a flickering light in his eyes which Hazel recognized; and she felt her spirit respond with exhilaration.

"If that's the case," he said in a quiet, icy voice, "I shall have to get out."

"But they won't give you bail!" she cried.

"Bail or no bail," said Cosgrove, "I can't disappoint Lederer if he wants to play another hand with me."

Christofferson came into the corridor.

"The judge is waitin', Brad," he announced.

At Manford the law seeks comfort rather than majesty, and Judge Peter Fairlove had his feet upon the battered desk which served as the bench from which he exuded justice. This morning it appeared that his honor enjoyed good humor. The air of the little court room, heavy with the odor of stale tobacco smoke, buzzed with the echo of his geniality. The editor, reporter, and general manager of the Manford *Argus* slouched in a seat at the back of the court room and loudly approved of it. Others who contributed to the murmur of voices that filled the room were Wert Farley and a group of cronies.

"There's shore a chance for big publicity in this case," said he of the *Argus*. His nasal voice was raised to carry the length of the court room, for by dint of this long-distance conversation it was his custom to make his pearls of wit and humor tell.

"Justice—that's all I aim for," protested his honor, accurately hitting the cuspidor. "Publicity don't mean nothing to me, only just see you spell my name with the full 'r' in Peter. It don't look good, just Pete."

"Here's the prisoner for this Cosgrove case, your honor," quoth Sheriff Christofferson, entering at that moment; and all present watched with interest the passage of Bradley Cosgrove down the aisle. Cosgrove approached the raised dais upon which justice sat, and of all those present he seemed least interested in the business at hand.

Farley was not so dense that he did not feel that Cosgrove gave the effect of a distinguished Easterner present for the purpose of inspecting local institutions. The honorable judge felt this, too, and he brought the legs of his chair down to the floor with a thump, drew himself up at his desk, and straightened his necktie, as a tribute to the respect which Cosgrove unconsciously demanded.

"You are charged with murder in the first degree," he announced severely. He endeavored to convey that if any worse charge could have been invented for the crime Cosgrove was accused of he'd certainly have been indicted for it.

"Yes," said Cosgrove politely.

"Have you any plea to make?"

"I plead guilty of shooting Jacob Klien in self-defense," responded Cosgrove.

Hazel, who remained at the back of the court room with Gaines at her elbow, frowned thoughtfully.

She had expected to hear Cosgrove hotly defiant; she had expected denial, fight. His colorless admission puzzled her.

"The court cannot accept your plea. The charge is that of murder in the first degree. Have you got a lawyer?"

"I am my own lawyer."

His honor smiled. Conscious that he was now about to make a dramatic announcement—that his words were to be emblazoned on the morrow on the front page of the *Argus*, he drew himself up a little and assumed a voice of tremendous dignity.

"Then I'm going to give you two weeks to consult with yourself," he said. "You will be held by the sheriff of this county under a bail of five thousand dollars for trial in this court just two weeks from today at 10.45 A.M."

As the successful playwright accepts the plaudits of the enthusiastic audience, so his honor visibly swelled before the buzz which filled the court room at his words. He gave it a moment to have its fling and then returned to business.

"Have you a bondsman?" he asked the prisoner.

Cosgrove stared at him with twinkling, inquisitive eyes. He was wondering to what he owed this leniency.

"That's a mighty small bond for first-degree murder, your honor," he said, as if advising a friend.

Judge Fairlove appeared to resent that. "Better talk down, young feller," he snapped. "Got a bondsman?"

"I'm contracting to go bond for Mr. Cosgrove," said Gaines; and the court room fairly hummed with animation as indignant citizen hailed indignant citizen, and his honor withdrew from the scene.

The details of arranging bail concluded, Gaines found his way to the chambers of the judge. His honor, duty done, was relaxed with feet on desk once more.

"Pete," said Gaines, "it certainly was nice to get that boy bailed out thataway. We didn't expect it. No, sir, we didn't."

"Shucks," responded his honor. "That is all right. Wert Farley he asked I should fix it up like that, an' you know how it is—all the boys like to do the right thing by Wert."

Gaines regarded his honor through narrowed lids. It seemed inconceivable that Fairlove was telling the truth, and yet the simple fellow obviously felt under no obligation to lie for Farley. His honor was an honest man after his kind.

"H-mph," Gaines snorted. "That was right good of him."

"Shore was," agreed Fairlove. "Say, there'll be a heap of publicity about this case, John."

But the active, practiced mind of John Gaines was occupied already with this new mystery in the affairs of Bradley Cosgrove. It was imperative that he must know why Farley desired Cosgrove's freedom. He took leave of the judge to approach the men who he suspected would have the information he desired.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN ANGER IS TRUTH.

SINCE her father's death Hazel Farley had "roomed and boarded" in the house of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Slade, who ran the store. In view of the attitude the community had taken toward the greatest murder case Manford had enjoyed for years, Cosgrove had persuaded her to leave him after the scene in the courthouse, knowing that her presence beside him would provoke gossip.

Hazel, convinced that the action of Judge Fairlove was a triumph of justice in the face of Cosgrove's enemies, scarcely noticed the distance between the main street of Manford and the residential section. She strode with happy, vigorous steps to the particular frame house which was the Slade home; and here, having bounded up the steps of the porch, she was immeasurably surprised to find herself face to face with Cliff Lederer.

"Why, Cliff," she cried in dismay, "what are you doing here?"

"We're partners," he explained sociably. "Ain't it natural I should come and visit my little partner?"

Instantly she felt herself placed on the defensive, and by a natural reaction she immediately attacked.

"I've just come from the courthouse," she said coldly. "Bradley Cosgrove is free on bail."

"Yeah; I heard about it."

His indifference nettled her. She turned to the door, opening it.

"Considering that," she remarked, "it seems to me that Wert Farley is the partner you'd better get together with."

Her words were a dismissal; but, to her dismay, he followed her into the house.

"No," he declared. "There's something I've got to say to you that Farley ain't got anything to do with."

"If it's about the ranch," she said, "you are laboring under a large-sized mistake. I can't say that I like the company I'm thrown with, but while we're partners I'm playing fair. When we talk business, we talk it all together."

She knew that her words were beside the point. She knew that ranch business was far from his mind. She had no inkling of what the issue was, but she fought it away.

"Now, don't that sound good?" he chuckled, and slumped down into a rocking chair. "You certainly got religion since yore dad died, Hazy."

She regarded him indignantly. His shaft was so obviously aimed at Cosgrove.

"And you seem to have got a lame arm," she insinuated. Again she was nettled by his failure to resent her goading.

"You and me ought not to fight this way, Hazel," he pointed out. "It seems like we done nothin' but fight since we was kids, an' it's foolish." He read accurately the repulsion with which her eyes greeted this overture, and hastened to overcome it."

"Now, I ain't trying to cover up that I was always to blame," he protested. "The trouble was, I got to lookin' on you like a kid sister. I didn't give you the respect I ought to, see? That's natural, ain't it? An' I've been wild." He seemed bent upon giving himself no mercy upon inviting her reprobation, indeed demanding it. "I've been wild," he said penitently; "but I can change that over."

Hazel had been watching him with her head a little tilted, as though she were fascinated by this spectacle of Cliff Lederer penitent. She gave him no credit for sincerity, and he deserved none.

"Oh, no, Cliff," she said; "you can't change that over. Because it isn't wildness; it's beastliness."

He frowned fleetly, for an instant disconcerted by her frankness; then he reclaimed his smile.

"That's as you say, Hazel," he remarked. "But I wish you would see different. You see, now, between us we own two-thirds of the Bar Nothing Ranch." With that he sat up erect in the rocker, leaning a little forward. It was as if he had pronounced an ultimatum. "You an' me," he said.

"Well?" She pointedly refused to see his meaning.

"Well, you know what your dad always wanted to see. He wanted to see you an' me married. That was natural," he hurried on, preventing her from voicing her indignation. "He wanted to see the ranch go on, in the family, you might say. Now, why shouldn't we do that, Hazel? Can't you see that I'd be different settled down? A man's got to some time."

But while he spoke she had been gazing without illusion upon a picture of the man as limned by his past. A wastrel of the range was the Clifford Lederer she knew—Gambler, bully, professional murderer, and profligate.

She could not remember a single scene in his turbulent career which presented him in any finer guise than as a brutal but superb master of horses, and even in that rôle his cruelty had appalled her. She knew there was no good in him.

"If that's all you got to say, Cliff," she said, "I wish you would go. You ought to realize that I know you too well for any such pretense on your part to succeed."

"Well, what does that signify? You know me. All right—you got to marry some time; every girl has. And I'm your partner on the ranch. You can't change that. Whoever you marry, it's goin' to be me that's with you all the time, at yore side all the time, runnin' the cattle for you.

"And what better man do you know than me? Who else on the range is a better man than I am?" He was on his feet now, and there was a threat in his voice. What other man would dare come to share the Bar Nothing Ranch with him?

And she knew one who was finer, more cultured, than any native of the range she had met. And he was a man who could, and would, and had already, dared dispute with this gun-toting bully the outrageous claim he made. But that was a chord upon which she could not play.

"You seem to overlook my uncle," she parried. "He has a share in the Bar Nothing Ranch, too."

He grinned, finding something in her words which cooled his temper. Unwittingly she had led to his trump card, and he played it.

"That's why you'd better go in with me," he said. "You ain't got any reason to love Wert Farley, an' if you an' me stick together we can fix things so he'll be a lot glad to get out of his share and leave us to run the ranch alone. There's a combination to think about, Hazy. The Bar Nothing Ranch is something to own."

The confidence with which he set forth this idealistic enterprise, the patronage which he tendered her in this inclusion with his plans, stirred her to anger.

"You must have been drinking, Cliff!" she cried. "To come here with the suggestion that I join you to cheat and swindle the man you've joined with to cheat and swindle me is as funny as your claims to decent manhood. I suppose I ought not to be surprised by anything you do or say, because, as you said, we've known each other since childhood. But I'll tell you what I've learned to know about you. I've learned that you're as treacherous and low as your own words have proven! I've learned that as far as the difficulty of finding a better man than you is concerned, I could go to the gutter and pick up a hundred of them.

"No—don't lose your temper. Remember that at least one man has put you out of commission in fairer fight than you're accustomed to. *There's* a man who can deal with you! There's a man who makes you pitiful by contrast.

"I don't suppose I ought to blame you for the weakness and the lowness that you can't help, Cliff, but as for joining with you in these rotten plans of yours, I'd rather share my fortunes with a rattlesnake."

She appeared wondrously beautiful as she stood there, her small hands clenched, and spoke her mind in the voice of righteous anger. But he lost the sense of beauty in the fury of rage which her taunts aroused.

She knew as she defied him that had it not been for that wounded arm he would have answered her with more force than his words contained.

He cursed violently, tearing the veil from his ugly spirit.

"Damn him!" he cried; and he stood away from her, seeming to huddle into himself as he pressed the bound arm to his breast. "You'll see what we'll do to him! You—fool! You played with him like any girl of the streets, because he wears better clothes than us. You think that because he showed orf his gun play an' put Klien out of the way he's the hero you been lookin' for!

"An' because you make yourself cheap for him, runnin' from sheriff to judge an' judge to sheriff, that it's yore doin' he's free to-day. No, I won't stop. I won't shut up for any damned woman on earth. I'm tellin' you now, an' what I'm tellin' you is the truth.

"*We* got him free—me an' Farley. An' we didn't get him free for no homecomin' celebration. It's a song an' dance we got *him* free for. We do the singin', an' he dances on air. You talk as big as you like about yore little tin pilgrim, but before a hell of a long time's over he's goin' to be taken out of town an' hung like a dawg!"

"What do you mean?" she cried.

"I mean that he's free as a locoed mule. Now he's out of jail, anybody can have him to hang that wants to." He laughed aloud, keenly enjoying the terror which marked her face. "Now what you got to say?" he mocked. "Who's the better man now? You got to learn, kid, that a rattlesnake does a hell of a lot more than rattle!"

He laughed again, and, turning, strode from the house. She stood alone, transfixed with the knowledge he had left her. She had no delusion. The plan was all too characteristic of Cliff Lederer and his kind. They had freed Cosgrove to hang him. When and where the hanging was to take place she did not know, but that Lederer in his rage had spilled out the truth she did not doubt.

And the knowledge of Cosgrove's peril pressed upon her, held her motionless, entranced with fear. She who in a hundred tense situations had kept her head, acting coolly and quickly, in the face of this horror was stunned.

And then came reason—or, rather, came that instinctive power given to woman to rise above fear and horror. As though on strong wings she ascended above the panic which never left her mind, and saw her way clearly, hopefully. She must not go to Cosgrove. He would fight. If there were a thousand enemies, he would fight; and Lederer had all Manford on his side. She was conscious of that; she knew the heat with which the *Argus* had inflamed the mob.

No, she must not go to Cosgrove—she must plan first for his escape. But how? With what means? She thought of Gaines. That would be the man.

Gaines, strong, powerful in the regard of the community, experienced in warfare, and wise in the ways of the range. She must not go to Cosgrove; she would go first to Gaines.

CHAPTER XV.

FIGHT, NOT FLIGHT.

COSGROVE, having parted with Hazel Farley at the courthouse, had waited for Gaines, who had followed the judge to his chambers, to rejoin him. Gaines, however, hot upon the trail which the judge had revealed to him, had gone to solve the problem of Farley's leniency, and Cosgrove waited in vain.

In this manner he avoided the crowd which had loitered about the courthouse for some time after the sensational examination and, finally deciding to return to his house alone, encountered few of his fellow townsmen between the courthouse steps and the public flivver which he engaged to drive him home.

It was characteristic of Cosgrove that from the moment he perceived that Farley had determined to press his outrageous charge of murder, his mind had been occupied by his prospective defense. He knew that the vicissitudes of jail, indictment and examination, ludicrously as they had been parodied by the local authorities, were mere formalities.

So his mind busily occupied itself with a rehearsal of every detail that could be used for or against him. He found that on the whole he had a good case; a case that should confound Farley and his cohorts before the court and the community.

Preoccupied, he took no notice of the dour silence which the driver of his flivver maintained, and was ignorant, too, of the speculating glances of those who saw him on the street. Arriving at his house he set about unpacking the cases of books which had arrived while he had languished in jail. He set aside certain volumes vital to his needs. He chuckled happily as he reflected upon the good fortune which had brought these volumes to his hand in the hour when he most needed them.

And then he pondered upon the cause for that unexpected freedom. He was far too efficient, however, to dwell for long on a matter he could not fathom, and he plunged into a study of procedure.

Thus occupied, he made an interesting contrast to the Cosgrove, flat on the ground and gun blazing, as he disarmed Cliff Lederer, or compared with that Cosgrove who poured death upon the treacherous Klien. Immersed in his books he had the cloistered aspect of a young man who might easily be at a loss regarding which end of a gun projected the bullet.

His bowed shoulders were slim, his flaxen hair absurdly rumpled as he ran his fingers through it. When the boy who was Gaines's messenger arrived, he had to knock long upon the door before he disturbed this scholastic youth.

Cosgrove tore open the envelope:

> Stay round the house till I come. Important news to give you. JOHN GAINES.

That was all. Cosgrove frowned over it. "If you see Mr. Gaines," he told the messenger, "tell him I'll be here." And he returned to his books. A very efficient young man, this Cosgrove.

When Gaines and Hazel came at nine o'clock that night to Cosgrove's house, they found him still engrossed; still bent over the books, his glasses glistening in the light of a kerosene lamp, and the remnants of a hasty supper on the chair beside his table. They had thrown open the door without ceremony, and he turned to them without betraying what his action might have been had they proved to be enemies.

"You're tired," was his greeting for the girl. And she was. So was Gaines. They had been working all afternoon and came to him without having eaten since midday.

"No," she said, her eyes burning feverishly. "Not tired. Bradley, you've got to go! They're after you!" She turned desperately to Gaines. "Tell him!" she cried.

"Letting you out on bail was a trick of Farley's," explained Gaines hurriedly. "It was his move. He asked Fairlove to do it. See?"

"No, I don't," said Cosgrove.

"Well, it was to take you out of the sheriff's hands, out of his protection. Do you see that?" Gaines's voice hammered the words home upon Cosgrove with a booming emphasis.

"They're planning to lynch you!"

At this Cosgrove stood for a moment silent, looking from Gaines to the girl.

"Well," he said at last and quietly; "when?"

"To-night!" cried Hazel. "They're meeting at the Bar Nothing Ranch to-night! Lederer's rounding them up!"

Still Cosgrove stood immovable, regarding them.

"But when they get here," said Gaines heavily, "they'll find the bird flown. We've been at it all afternoon, Brad, and we've got your trail fixed so that there ain't a tracker on earth can follow it. You can't get out by train, see? Because they'll watch the station. And they'll watch the roads likewise.

"But there's a backroad over to the west that I could drive the car through blindfolded, and we'll run you over to White Butte by it. There's a horse waitin' for you there, and we've arranged horses likewise at Taggard and Two Aces. You ride from one to the other, and at Two Aces you can get a flivver that'll see you over the State line before morning.

"Come on. I'll be back here before they make a start, and you can leave it to me to fix things up after yo're gone!"

But Cosgrove was staring at the girl. She had sunk into a chair and he stood looking down upon her.

"When is the time they've fixed for this event?" he asked.

"Now! To-night!" she cried. "They're going to ride over here at midnight! They'll be gathered at the Bar Nothing now! Oh, don't stand talking there! Change your clothes and get away. You've got to ride fifty miles before the morning!"

With that Cosgrove lifted one hand and swept his glasses from his eyes. To them it had become a familiar gesture, and divining what it meant, she arose, as if to forestall him. But he turned upon Gaines with his imperative spirit blazing in his eyes.

"Give me a gun!" he demanded. "Quick!"

"For God's sake hold hard, Brad!" cried Gaines, instinctively clutching at the weapon beneath his coat.

"What are you going to do?" cried the girl.

"The only thing!" Cosgrove responded. "Why didn't you tell me before? You urge me to run away when the only thing to do is stand and fight. I'm on bail! I'm bound to stay here, where the fight is! And you lay out a trail for my escape! Give me a gun, John, quick! I'm going over to the Bar Nothing and blow that party to the four winds before ever they take the trail!"

"No!" Hazel cried. "No! For God's sake listen, Brad! Listen to me!" She flung herself in front of him, all dissimulation cast away, and fixed him with the urgent pleading of her eyes.

"We've worked for you, Brad! We've struggled and planned for you! All day we've spent without food or rest, planning, concealing. Why, we haven't been able to send a single message in the open. We've wormed information from men who have cursed us for our trouble, and we've bribed and pleaded for you! All for you!

"And now you've got to do as I say! You've got to! Go with John Gaines and leave the State until this thing blows over! Go now! Quickly!"

"Ah, I know!" he cried. "You are the best friends a man ever had! But what you want me to do I can't! It isn't in me! I've got to stay and fight!" He turned upon Gaines. "Give me that gun, John, or, by Heaven, I'll go unarmed."

"They'll kill you!" she cried. "They'll kill you!"

But John Gaines knew he was not to be dissuaded, and reluctantly he handed Cosgrove the gun.

"Ammunition!" cried Cosgrove. And Gaines empted the belt at his waist.

Hazel ran to the door and turned facing them.

"Ah, don't go!" she cried.

He was in front of her, trying gently to displace her.

"No!" she cried. But he pulled her away.

"You don't understand," he murmured gently.

So she grasped his coat, his sleeve and fiercely pleaded with him.

"Ah, stop him! Help me! Don't go! I can't let you! I won't let you! Listen to me!"

She cried out the last words in a passion of pleading.

"If you go to that place and die," she cried, "I shall never forgive myself!"

Firmly he took her by the shoulders and turned her from his path.

"If I should run away," he said, "you would never forgive *me!* Good-by."

And she became limp in his grasp, so that he had to place her in the arms of Gaines before he plunged through the door and sprang into the car which awaited him outside.

CHAPTER XVI.

DEFIANCE.

WERT FARLEY regretted the death of Klien. He had cherished no affection for that harsh, barbaric figure, for Wert had not an affectionate disposition; but now that Klien was gone, Farley missed him. And he missed him because he knew that his remaining confederate was not to be trusted.

As he shared the ranch house with Cliff Lederer this evening, the absence of the cow-puncher having left these two together, that mistrust was emphasized in Farley's mind by the involuntary reluctance with which he responded to Lederer's insistence that he make clear the details of their situation.

"Shore," he answered guardedly to Lederer's importunities. "Shore we've got to stick together. But you, Cliff, have got to play a different hand to me, and we'll each play our hand alone. The boys'll be here to-night, for this necktie party yo're staging, but I don't want to know anything about it. I don't even want to know who's in it. It's yore party, an' you play it alone. Likewise I'm playin' with the lawyers an' such. An' I play my hand alone. See?"

Lederer saw. He made that known with profane gayety.

"I ain't no unweaned calf," he protested. "I can see how we got to keep the two sides separate an' come into court all nice an' clean thataway. But all I want to know is, what did you do with Jake's gun?"

Farley gazed at him bleakly.

"That's to do with my part of the game, Cliff. It don't concern you where Jake's gun got to. According to the evidence, he didn't carry no gun."

Lederer laughed. His laugh was ugly.

"Then I want to know what he did with it." he sneered.

Farley was perplexed. Lederer's tone admitted no doubt of his determination to know the particulars whereby Cosgrove was to be sacrificed to their passionate ambitions, and yet Farley was loath to trust Lederer with those particulars. If there was to be a double-cross in this game Farley was determined that Lederer should possess no opportunity of exercising it.

"The fewer people who know that," he parried. "The safer we're goin' to be."

"An' you expect me to take the lead in stringin' this pilgrim up to-night without knowin' how the evidence is fixed? Huh! That would be nice, wouldn't it? A fine chance for you to turn 'round when yo're through with me an' show 'em how I strung him up fer nothin'!"

"I don't cheat!"

"No?" Lederer grinned broadly. "Don't fool yourself, Wert. You an' me ain't doin' nothin' else but cheatin'. That's our game. We're playin' fer high stakes, an' we got the cards stacked. Now that's fine! That's how I like it to be! But I want to know how they're stacked! Before I go on any further, I want to know that gun ain't goin' to turn up an' bobble the deal!"

"Well, it ain't!"

"Why not?"

"I'll see it don't, that's why!"

"Then where is it?" Lederer's voice was an ultimatum.

Farley knew it. He gazed at his fellow creature without rancor, but with great reluctance and mistrust.

"Make it quick, Wert! We ain't got all night!"

"It's here!" said Farley, and he patted the holster at his side. Lederer's eyes widened.

"Is that the gun Jake had when he was killed?"

"Shore," Farley chuckled, flattered by the other's evident surprise. "The best place to hide anything is where ev'rybody can see it. So I'm wearin' it myself."

"But Gaines will recognize it, you fool!"

"Talk easy, Cliff!" snarled Farley. Then: "It don't signify if he sees it or not. There ain't no difference between one six-gun and another!"

Lederer stood silent, regarding his accomplice with an admiration which had in it something of awe.

"Brad Cosgrove ain't got all the brains in this outfit," gloated Farley.

"How'd you work it? How'd you get Jake's gun orf him?" inquired Lederer.

Farley stepped over to the window seat and began to stamp about with his booted foot upon the floor. Suddenly he seemed to find what he sought.

"Here," he said. "Tread here."

Lederer, joining him, pressed his foot obediently upon the spot indicated. A board moved beneath his tread.

"When Jake was shot," explained Farley, "he was sittin' in that seat, there, an' he was leanin' forward a leetle; that was because he had a gun in his hand an' was anxious to get in the first shot. When the bullet hit him he jumped up an' his foot hit that loose board an' threw it out of place. When I came to him there was a hole in the floor, an' I just unbuckled his belt an' slipped it down into that hole while his body an' the curtains shielded me—No, you can't get it up now because it's nailed down. But it's rotten an' still moves when you tread heavy—"

He fell to his knees and pressed the board with his hands, running his grimy nails about the edges of it.

"I'd a put in a new one," he murmured uneasily. "Only they'd take notice of it."

Lederer swore appreciatively, and stopped short as he heard heavy footsteps advancing through the kitchen.

"Get up, quick!" he snapped; but Farley was off balance and a heavy man, so he was still on his hands and knees when Frank Slade strode into the room with two other cattlemen at his heels.

"Cleanin' house?" he asked jovially.

"Fixin' up the floor a little," explained Farley with crimson face. He arose and edged away from the window seat. "Me, I got to be movin' along," he said.

"Stick around," adjured Slade. "This work we got to do—"

"Wert ain't anxious to assist," snapped Lederer quickly. And the group of men stared at him, perplexed, as Farley left the room. Then they became profanely inquisitive.

"Wert's all hipped to call the deal fer us if there should be any questions asked after this party to-night," explained Lederer. "It's best somebody should be free to see we get a square deal."

"Who else is in it?"

"Gilley, an' two more hands from the ranch. An' Mears; Web, he's givin' up choir practice to come, an' there's Talbert an' Ahrens comin' over from the bottoms."

"Well, they better make it pronto," Slade was obviously ill at ease. "The whole township's riled up about this killin', an' Cosgrove's shore goin' to hear there's somethin' comin', if we don't act quick."

At this point Gilley came in with a group of hard-bitten range men at his heels; and, as guests arrive at a party, the ranch house began to resound to the rattle of dragged spurs, the jingle of bridle chains, the subdued clatter of hoofs in the yard outside.

But, unlike the overture of a party, the hum of conversation was singularly lacking. These men greeted one another shortly, with nothing of comradeship and, having arrived, they hung about the room with few words, awaiting some pronouncement of the grim business upon which they knew themselves to be engaged.

Lederer did the honors of the occasion in the same taciturn manner. He moved about among the men as they arrived, with his arm in a sling and a gun at his belt, checking the men in his mind, keenly alert for the presence of any one who would not be a desirable accomplice for this business.

When it appeared that all who were expected had arrived, he made his way to

a position beside the door which gave egress from the front of the ranch—a door which was never used by the cattlemen—and facing the room, did as much as call the meeting to order.

"Slade's all in favor of speedin' activities up," he said. "Me, too. But it ain't eleven o'clock yet, an' we don't want to ride 'round till the roads are clear. We know that what we're doin' is right an' fair, but we don't want to make things hard for the sheriff to explain away. We got to do it secret enough to avoid talk."

He appraised his company as he spoke, and was pleased with it. There were ten men grouped about him, counting Gilley and the other two who were hirelings of the Bar Nothing ranch, henchmen to be trusted. The quality of the remaining seven filled Lederer with pride in the adroitness of his own strategy. For those seven men were no small figures of the range; they were representative citizens to a man, and Lederer had wrought upon them to do this business for him in a spirit of high justice and righteous indignation.

Slade, who sat in the window seat with his eyes dwelling unconsciously upon the spot where Farley had replaced that loose board, was convinced of Cosgrove's guilt, and having seen the dapper, pale young man as he appeared in the court room, was determined that the men of the range should avenge this assassination as practiced in the effete East.

All these men knew what gunplay was and, while frequently regretting it, even resenting it, felt confident of the manliness involved in it. But they would never permit it to be said of Manford that a shot in the back could be indulged in there with impunity. So they sat there, in a silence becoming to the sacred cause they represented; regretting the necessity of it, but conscious of the rights involved.

"Shucks! We ought to string him up right in the middle of town. I don't see any need of sneakin' this thing off in the dark. He ought to be hung, an' we're goin' to hang him! Let's go!" Thus spoke Webb, a sturdy ranchman who varied the monotony of the range by singing bass in the church choir.

"Cliff's right," Slade insisted. "Do it late and save talk."

"This Cosgrove," pursued Lederer, "ain't no man to waste talk over. He ain't like men we know. He hasn't even got the guts of a greaser. He don't belong where men live at all, but I'll tell you where he does belong.

"You'll find his kind down back of the stockyards in Kansas City. A tenderloin gunman, that's what he is; the kind that sneaks down alleyways and shoots in the back. You know he was here in town the night that Mase Farley was shot thataway— Why, he ain't no man at all!

"An' there ain't no reason for us to talk about hangin' him, because to let his kind get away with them back alley methods would be to lay open the whole range to them. Manford's always been a place for a man to live in. We always had our own way of settlin' differences, an' they've been right abrupt sometimes an' fatal. But we done it like men.

"This Cosgrove comes in an' does it like a coyote or a snake. The question is, are we goin' to allow him to get away with it? Are we goin' to open the range to the the scum of the city slums, or not?"

"An' the answer is, 'We ain't,'" snapped Webb.

A murmur filled the room, supporting him; it reverberated in the confines of the thin walls, as a distant storm rumbles up the wind; menacing, deadly. Lederer broke in upon it, his loud, youthful voice, capping it, dominating it.

"An' we'll hang him like the hound he is!" he cried. "I got Thunderbolt outside, who has thrown every buckaroo in three States. I got Thunderbolt all saddled an' bridled. We'll put this skunk on Thunderbolt with a rope 'round his neck, an' we'll hitch the rope to a tree! That red devil will heave him so far he'll be lucky if his head don't come orf at the neck! That's how we'll hang him!"

Slade arose from his seat, very gravely.

"Yo're shore talkin' wild, Cliff," he said. "That ain't no way to hang a man. We got to do it dignified an' straight. This ain't no rodeo."

Lederer glared at him with the fury of

an ardent orator, who, believing his audience with him, finds disaffection in its ranks.

"No, it ain't no rodeo!" he bellowed. "But we got to make an example of the swine. We got to hang him like no man was ever hung in Manford before. We ain't never had a bad man on the range that was like him.

"He comes in like a half weaned calf, all quiet an' ladylike, so you don't expect trouble.

"Jake Klien didn't expect none. He sat there where you been sittin', an' Cosgrove gave him the lie. When Klien answered back, he pulls a gun an' shoots him, kills him without a chance an' without no warnin'. Klien, you know, would've faced the finest gunman on the range if he had warnin' an' was armed.

"But this skunk plays like he's a regular girl for peacefulness, an' takin' Jake when he didn't have no gun, shoots him all to hell! An' you talk of bein' nice to him! Why, you're standin' on the very spot where Jake Klien fell an' died!"

"I don't say be nice. We're here to hang him, an' however you look at it, hangin' ain't nice," protested Slade. "But we don't want no circus stunts."

And while he spoke he was peculiarly conscious of the spectacle Farley and Lederer had made as they knelt over this place where he stood, "the very spot where Jake Klien fell an' died!" Slade now moved his foot on that carpet, and beneath it he felt a loose board move. He wondered at the perversity of his mind which tried to connect the death of Klien with a loose board in the floor.

"No circus stunts," sneered Lederer, "but a first class hangin'! This yeller rat stands fer the city. Thunderbolt stands fer the range. It's fittin' Thunderbolt should finish him orf. An' I want to say that the way that hawse'll throw this pilgrim will be a pretty sight to see. She'll throw him to the end of his rope!"

"She won't throw him at all!" cried Slade. "We ain't goin' to use her!"

"An' I say we are!"

"Put it up to the committee!" boomed Webb. "Boys, you heard 'em. Cliff says we use Thunderbolt; Slade says no. Who wins?"

The front door flew open with a crash and a man stood on the threshold. He had a gun on either hip, and a hand on the butt of either gun.

"Slade wins!" cried the man in the doorway. "And Slade loses, too. You're not going to use Thunderbolt, and you're not going to use Slade. In short, the party's off. I'm Cosgrove, of Manford!"

CHAPTER XVII.

SPOILING THE PARTY.

COSGROVE, OF MANFORD! And he stood in the doorway with the authority of an avenging deity glowing in the blueness of his eyes.

Cosgrove, of Manford! And they had been forming in their minds the feeble, degenerate figure of Cosgrove as Lederer had painted him; Cosgrove of the alley ways, Cosgrove of the stockyards, Cosgrove of the dives and gutters and dens of a teeming city.

They had resolved to hang him because of what he was, and they were convinced they knew all about him. They were convinced that the weak, unmanly figure of the effete cities, if he had known of their meeting would have fled like a frightened coyote.

And in the face of that conviction here was Cosgrove, himself, not weak, not unmany, not of the cities, but Cosgrove, of Manford, confronting them with indomitable courage in his eyes; alone in the face of their guns, dauntless in the knowledge of their purpose. He had not even drawn the revolvers that hung at his sides.

He had not even demanded that they throw their hands aloft. "I'm Cosgrove, of Manford!" that was all he said; and they stared back at him, dominated by the picture he presented, by the myraid conjectures which rushed into their minds.

Lederer, standing beside the doorway in which Cosgrove stood, made some movement. He did not reach for his gun, for better than any other man in the room he knew what lightning response he would

invoke. But he moved. He shifted away from the wall.

"*Don't move!*" Cosgrove's voice rang with a sound which no man there had heard before. His hands hung lightly at his sides, his arms a little bent; it was as though his fingers hovered about the grips of those two guns.

Gilley arose slowly from his chair, but only Cosgrove noticed him. All other eyes were fixed on the man in the doorway.

"For God's sake, don't move!" he repeated. "I don't want to kill a man tonight!" Gilley stood rooted in his place.

His eyes, with the mystery of blue flame in them, seemed to cover all these men at once. His presence held them rigid, and the sight of him stamped his figure indelibly upon them.

Frank Slade especially remembered him and was destined never to forget him. Many years later he could have described him in every detail; the texture of the white shirt he wore, and how it spread slightly open at the throat, so that in a peculiar manner it set off the like whiteness of his skin; the chaps which Cosgrove had donned over his well fitting trousers, the number of cartridges about his waist.

Cosgrove had stopped at Manford long enough to acquire those chaps and that extra gun, and he had left his coat in the car which he hired to bring him to this scene. To this fighting equipment that thus impressed his figure on Slade's mind, he added the ringing tenor of his voice.

"But if you start shooting," he cried. "Just remember that I'm giving you a fair start!" He flung these words at Lederer; and as he spoke them Gilley snatched at his gun.

There was a roar of shots, and another of the Bar Nothing men drew to fire as Gilley crumpled slowly to the floor. Cosgrove leaped across the room and felled the other with a blow of one fist which held a smoking gun. He disarmed the cowboy as he fell, and spun about to face the room again with Gilley dead at his feet.

Cosgrove's movement had been so lightning like that he seemed to execute it all in a single gesture. He had drawn and fired, crossed the room, felled his man and whirled upon them again, before any but Lederer and Slade had managed to extract their weapons from the holsters; and that leap across the room had been so unexpected as to baffle the few who sprang to action.

"Drop 'em!" roared Cosgrove in a fury of resolution. Lederer's gun dropped to the floor with a clatter. Slade stared at the young man a moment with his own weapon in his hand. A slight movement, a quick pressure on the trigger was all he needed; but it was more than he could do.

With the blue passion of Cosgrove's eyes upon him, and a vague realization of the spirit behind those eyes, Slade felt suddenly that here was a man he had no desire to fight with. His gun fell from his hand to the floor.

Cosgrove's voice fell to a conversational level, but Slade found himself as he heard it, recalling the sound of falling icicles as they had broken from his eaves in time of thaw.

"Now you know how we stand," said Cosgrove. And grinned. "As for this hanging, I'm telling you that no man has ever died by my gun with a smaller chance of his life than this poor devil here." He touched the body of Gilley with his foot.

"You're here to hang me. I had plenty of warning and could have made clean away, but I came here to talk it over. This man," again he lightly prodded Gilley's corpse, "is a paid gunman for that pack rat." He waved a gun toward Lederer, "who would profit by seeing me hanged. You saw how quickly he passed up the privilege of exchanging shots; that's because his arm is still sore from the last time he did it. He let his gunman do the dirty work and you all had the opportunity to witness the result."

He paused for a moment, and smiled.

"Now most of you gentlemen mean well. I know that. You've just been listening to one side of the story. Lederer's side. I'll bet you've already found out some of it was lies. Now the proposition I'm going to make is this:

"If you hang me for the worst thing I've ever done, you'll hang me for the death of this poor hireling here. Klein had me covered before I drew, and I'm asking for a

chance to prove that in court. But you all saw me shoot this man to-night, and if you think that it was the work of a coward or a murderer take me out and hang me for it. I promise not to try to shoot more men than I've got cartridges in these guns!"

Again he paused and they acknowledged his words in silence.

"But if you believe that my coming here proves my willingness to meet any man I quarrel with in open fight, and my ability to deal with him, then for God's sake let this episode be closed! Tell me you trust me, and I'll turn my back on you, pass through that door, and ride away!"

Again there was a silence.

"Well, what is it? Do I pass out, or do I fight my way out?" Cosgrove's voice rose into the sharp tenor which had filled the room at his coming.

Slade arose to his feet and gazed straightforwardly into Cosgrove's face.

"Brother," he said. "If you'll let me pick up that gun, you and me will pass out together."

"And me, by God!" cried Webb. Reading Cosgrove's assent in his eyes, Slade picked up his gun, and, with Webb, he stood beside the man they had gathered to hang.

"I move we put it to a vote," drawled Webb, his eyes fixed sternly on Lederer. Sullenly Lederer dropped his gaze, and Slade saw it fall upon the gun at his feet. But Cosgrove was before him.

"But before you vote we'd better collect that gun from the floor and this one from Mr. Lederer's remaining playmate," he observed. He lightly snatched the gun from the remaining Bar Nothing man, and Slade quickly took charge of Lederer's revolver.

"All in favor signify by saying aye!" cried Webb.

"*Aye!*" thundered the roomful.

"The ayes have it!" roared Webb; and the door behind them was flung violently open.

Webb, Slade and Cosgrove whirled with ready weapons, but it was Hazel Farley who stood in the doorway. She stood there startled and amazed as she saw the three men pocket their guns and the others standing, submissive, in the room behind them.

"The party's over," smiled Cosgrove.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SUN-FISHING IN THE MOONLIGHT.

THE roomful of men stood in embarrassment, but Cosgrove, greeting the bright-faced girl and Gaines who was close upon her heels, achieved a peculiar effect of dismissing the whole affair. It was as though no tragedy had impended; as if he had never for an instant stood under sentence of death to fight for his life in the presence of his executioners.

It was as if the dead body of Gilley, and the stumbling form of the cow-puncher whom Cosgrove had felled and who now staggered to his feet, were things of a past long dead. And in thus dismissing the affair which still rocked the minds of the men who filled the room, Cosgrove covered them with embarrassment.

"But we heard shooting!" protested Hazel; and her eyes fell upon the dead man. "You shot him!" she cried.

"Yes," he spoke quietly. "I shot him in the face of a dozen guns. I shot him in fair fight."

His voice repeated the challenge which had won him his reprieve.

"And now," he said, "the party's over."

But if his appearance beside the girl covered the cattlemen with shame, there was one man present whom it filled with desperation. Lederer himself did not know how much his pursuit of this deadly game was centered in his dark desire for Hazel Farley.

"No, it ain't over by a long shot!" he cried. "You fellers must be crazy to let this bird get away like this! He's bluffed you and fooled you with his play acting until you ain't got no judgment left. With a rope round his neck he turns and fights. A dog would do that! A coyote would do that!

"But it don't do away with the fact that Jake didn't have a gun! And it don't do away with the fact that he shot Mase Far-

ley in the back! You set out to hang him, an' you got yeller at the sound of his voice!"

"Or his gun!" Webb sang out. "It was the sound of his gun that made you talk down, Cliff!"

Lederer turned purple with rage.

"His gun! You talk like a fool! Didn't I tell you he was a gunman! Hell! He comes from a place where they play with guns like a pack of club swingers in a circus! Read about 'em in the city papers. Gunmen fed on dope! But if you want to keep this country clean for a man to live in you'll hang such curs when they come out of their holes in the slums! We ain't just gunmen out here. We're riders an' punchers. Give him some work like that to do an' you'll see how much of a man he is!"

"Seems to me—" It was Slade's voice, and it was filled with doubt. But another cut him short.

"Cliff's right. Look at them clothes! He don't belong in our country!"

And Cosgrove, seeing the situation in the balance again, took the matter characteristically in hand. "Gaines," he cried. "Take Miss Farley out to your car. I'm riding home in the saddle!"

Lederer swore vividly.

"You ride home in a pine box!" he bellowed. "Fer the love o' God, men, hold on to him. Don't let that rattler go!"

He dashed forward as he spoke, for Cosgrove was already past the door, and Lederer followed him through the kitchen with the pressure of several men upon him. Some, led by Webb, were determined Cosgrove should go free; but there were others who sided with Lederer.

They struggled in the doorway which led to the porch. Encouraging or dissuading him, they held Lederer back. They pressed about him, bullied him, threatened him, endeavored to persuade him. But he fought like a madman to follow Cosgrove. Then suddenly Slade, who stood before him, gave way.

"Let him go," he said. "He can't hurt Cosgrove, and if Cosgrove will shoot an unarmed man now is Cliff's time to prove it!"

Ignoring this remark Lederer plunged through the doorway. Outside in a fair moonlight, Hazel and Gaines stood beside the little car which was some distance from the house. They stood there with their eyes upon Cosgrove, who, having approached a string of horses which stood ready saddled for the business which was to have occupied the night, now led forth a handsome sorrel mare.

"Not that one!" cried Hazel with a nervous laugh. "Don't take her! She's bad."

Cosgrove grinned.

"That's the horse I'm riding home," he said.

And Lederer, plunging forth from the house stopped short to glare at the scene in open-mouthed surprise until with a fierce satisfaction he realized its meaning.

"Good Lord!" he cried aloud. "He's goin' to ride Thunderbolt! She'll kill him!"

Slade ran forth from the steps, passing Lederer, just as Cosgrove, seizing a cheek strap and the pommel, vaulted into the saddle.

"Let be!" yelled Slade; and then he flung himself back as the red mare plunged down upon him.

It was as well he did so. Thunderbolt was known from Pendleton to Cheyenne and from Laredo to Butte, a rodeo horse, and only twice in her life had any man succeeded in riding her. Now, with Cosgrove in the saddle, she set forth to prove that there would never be a third one.

And she was the jug-headed, reckless kind, was Thunderbolt. If her rider didn't tumble gracefully, she was all ready to hang him on the corral fence, impaled on the broken timbers, crushed beneath Thunderbolt's own wicked weight, or torn asunder within their wracked and jolted bodies, victims of internal hemorrhage.

Lederer, knowing this, was satisfied. Hazel, Gaines and the few others who desired Cosgrove no harm, were horrified. They hoped for the best, which was that Cosgrove would fall at the first violent effort of the animal to displace him. But Cosgrove did not fall.

The wild animal, with its gleaming muscular body, flashed and twisted in weird contortions that in the moonlight appeared

like the writhing of a demon. Madly she bucked and leaped in twisting, frantic evolutions.

And the slim figure balanced upon her, rode loosely in the saddle, sometimes thrown prone upon the animal's writhing back, sometimes standing in his stirrups; but always he was a part of the picture. Instead of being the horse's victim he seemed some demon of another sort which had leaped in attack upon this fury from hell.

Thunderbolt did not buck as lesser horses do. She bucked with maniacal intelligence; she twisted with artful malice. In the darkness the spectators saw her take strange and awful shapes as she reared and sparred with her forefeet, only to whip them down and arise again.

She tottered there, menacing her rider with death beneath her crushing weight, but the crack of a pistol butt between her ears brought her down to thrash from side to side; and as she twisted Cosgrove was whipped cruelly about in the saddle. And again and again she cleared the ground to dash him down upon the saddle as she landed, legs wide.

Then she rolled, grinding the saddle into the earth as she threw herself on her back. But Cosgrove slid from her, alighting upright from a cloud of dust; and when she plunged to her feet he was upon her with a bound.

The red mare screamed in a monstrous rage, and plunged for the sheer wall of the house. What Cosgrove did then they could not see. The twist of his legs had something to do with it, and also the fact that his revolver butt was ever ready to his hand, as the other hand was strong upon the reins.

But they saw the red mare plunge skyward as she reached the wall, and she whirled on her hind legs and came bounding on with a series of bucking plunges which should have been agony to the rider. But he maintained his seat and there came an instant when Thunderbolt's head came up and twisted back toward him and horse and rider hovered in the air for a terrible fall.

What Cosgrove did in that moment was not bronco busting; it was not rodeo riding. It was a compound of supreme horsemanship and a master sense of balance. He balanced himself, and he balanced the maniac horse. He governed weight and movement and direction in that split second when tragedy impended, and in that split second Thunderbolt must have known she bore her master.

She came down, and she bucked no more. Instead, she plunged forward and thundered away.

With cries ranging from alarm to horror, all who had witnessed the battle trailed after her. For they knew that in her path lay the steep, unbroken drop to the road below.

Hazel Farley ran as she had not run since childhood. And she knew that she was running, as the others ran with her, to look upon the final scene of tragedy.

She reached the front of the house in time to see Cosgrove bring the mare up, dancing on the rim of the drop, fight her for a moment while she struggled for freedom; and then, as men pressed around her, Hazel flung herself forward to grasp the bridle rein. As though made frantic by this last indignity, Thunderbolt flung up her head as the girl reached forward and arose with her deadly forehoofs in the air.

And Cosgrove, to save the girl, swung the wicked animal about, facing the drop. The red mare with a snort, plunged forward and the horrified spectators saw man and horse disappear into the blackness.

They rushed to the brink, and peered downward into the darkness. But the moonlight was hidden by the sheer side of the bank and they could at first see nothing, hear nothing. Then they discerned an occasional flash and flicker, the reflection of the diffused moonlight, as it caught the moving body of something which went dashing, hurtling down. The descent made little noise in the sandy side of the bank.

There followed silence. It was protracted to the watchers who stood, spellbound, upon the rim. Then, like a voice from great depths, came a voice from the sunken road:

"Which way is Manford?"

It was the voice of Cosgrove, and they

knew that it was uneven because of his efforts to keep his fractious mount in the roadway. He had ridden the red devil down the high, precipitous bank, and wished to know the way home!

They stood stunned, lost in wonder and admiration. It was Hazel who broke that silence and her voice was filled with pride.

"Keep the bank on your right!" she cried.

There came a clatter of hoofs down the road to Manford in a manner which indicated that the rider had given the red mare her willful, rattle-brained head.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SPECIALIST IN REVENGE.

SINCE the inception of the case of the State vs. Cosgrove, Hazel Farley had found a new occupation. When Cosgrove came to the storekeeper's house the morning after his conquest of Thunderbolt, she arose from her chair at the dining room table where she had been bent over a heavy legal tome.

"We're partners in law as well as by circumstances," he grinned with satisfaction. And, to cover a sense of confusion which came over them he passed quickly to the reason for his coming.

"Where's Gaines?" he asked. "I've been all over town looking for him.

"Why?" she asked quickly, scenting some new development.

"I'll tell you later. You don't happen to know where Gaines is, do you?"

"Yes. He went over to Sheerwater this morning to see Judge Haynes. He's trying to round up some legal talent that won't be tampered with."

"Good man. Hazel, it's fine to have two such friends as I have in you and Gaines.

He stopped short, for he had used her Christian name for the first time. Something caused him to stand still and gaze into her eyes as though held by a peculiar fascination; something to which she responded in a like manner, until the consciousness of it fell upon them both. Then she laughed, and her laugh was happy so that it tinkled like a sweet-sounding bell.

"You're the most astonishing human being I've ever met!" she cried. "How on earth did you manage to ride that terrible Thunderbolt last night? She has killed men, and only two have ever ridden her down; one poor fellow died a week later. But you! Oh, I was afraid when you jumped upon her! It was impossible that you could ride her! Yet you did! You're like a magician!"

She laughed again, but this time her laugh was a little nervous, as though she was conscious that she had betrayed something of the feeling that moved her toward him. "It seems to me you've always got something up your sleeve."

He was regarding her with a steadfast, earnest gaze. It was plain that he took this very seriously.

"I have!" he said. "I *am* a magician! Don't you know why I went away from here; why I spent all my boyhood and youth in schooling myself in law?"

She frowned.

"It was something that was between your father and my father, wasn't it?" she ventured.

"Yes! Death and ruin. My father was hot-blooded and proud. He was successful, too. But he couldn't play the same game as his enemies did. He wasn't—unscrupulous—enough! There! I didn't mean to offend you!"

"You didn't!" she responded instantly. "I know well enough the ways my father used, and you're right. If a man was too proud to hire paid gunmen, or use the methods of an Indian raider, he didn't stand much chance against dad!" She spoke bitterly.

"Well," his voice dismissed from their conversation the painful element which troubled her. "I was sent out to study law so that we could fight back with finer weapons and on higher ground than my father's enemies knew." He paused a moment and a retrospective smile stole over his features.

"But Lord, I knew from the time I was a little kid how far the law would go unless we enforced it with a power as great as theirs. I knew what I'd be up against well enough, and while I prepared for the law I prepared at the same time for action.

"You know, I'm not any tenderfoot, really. I've got the range in my blood; the love of it and the feel of it. A horse isn't an animal to me. It never has been. It's as much a companion, as much a part of my social life as any human friend I've had in the world. Anyway, I knew the range.

"And I knew that the men of the range are largely—half-baked, that's the word. I knew it by instinct. I knew that the best buckaroos aren't really horsemen, don't really understand the build and action of the animal, or its mind; they're just riders. And I knew that the gunmen aren't really marksmen; they're just blundering fire eaters."

He was speaking in a low, earnest voice, and as he paused his eyes eagerly put the question which she answered without waiting for his words.

"I understand," she murmured. "I know I've thought that myself. Since you came here." He smiled.

"I knew you'd understand," he said, gratified. "So I set out to acquire all that they haven't got; to excel them at their own game, do you see? I learned horsemanship; not merely how to stick in the saddle as these men do, but the art of equitation. I could tell you more about flexions, coördinations and conformation than you knew had anything to do with a horse.

"And I added that to the knowledge and feeling for horses that's born in me. And I added all that to riding, riding, riding, all kinds of riding on all kinds of horses. I've played groom, trainer, jockey and riding teacher.

"I did trick riding in circuses for three summers. I can turn somersaults on a horse's back and jump through hoops. I've put devils of horses over jumps that no man present would try. I've ridden every bad horse, mustang, thoroughbred, hack or hunter that I could reach and beg, borrow or steal permission to ride. I know there's no horse that can't be ridden, just as there's no man that can't be thrown. But Thunderbolt is a horse I can understand.

"And then shooting! It's all a matter of practice. With most of the men out here it's a matter of bluff. And the practice I've had is the queerest practice you ever dreamed of. In the heart of civilization I did it. Not merely firing at targets, you know, that's the simplest part of it.

"I'll contract to hit anything any size, standing or moving, that I can see and that's in range of my gun. But gunplay! Do you know how I practiced that?" he laughed gleefully at the complex emotion in her eyes.

"You said it yourself. It was you saying it that set me off. Magician, you said. And that's the fact. I learned to draw, aim and fire a gun from a professional juggler and sleight of hand man. It's not only that I can draw fast and shoot straight, but I can keep four guns in the air at once and fire each one as it passes through my hand. I can make a gun appear or disappear just like the rabbit in the hat.

"But it takes practice. That's how we've got 'em, Hazel. Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand men know that practice is needed to become expert in anything, but only one in a million has the concentration and determination to practice regularly and monotonously day after day on every detail which will perfect him. I couldn't have done it myself if I hadn't known."

"Known what?" she asked.

"That when I returned here it would mean success or failure, life or death," he replied. And in a strange way his words seemed to shut a door. It was as if a curtain had fallen on an act.

She turned and walked over to the window, where she stood, looking out into the street. To her amazement she saw Thunderbolt standing restless beneath a cottonwood tree which grew before the house. The glistening red mare was hitched to the lowest branch of the tree like any ordinary horse.

Hazel turned quickly to Cosgrove who stood leaning over the books upon the table. To him, as to her, the moment following his self-revealing speech had been a moment of supreme delicacy. He was conscious that he had wholly stripped from himself the veil of mystery which was half his strength, but he did not know that by his very revelation a new and deeper mystery had been

presented to her. He looked up, feeling her scrutiny.

"You'll never get anything out of Cummings & Gilbert," he remarked. "This book deals with procedure in New York courts. It doesn't take such a phenomenon as Judge Fairlove into consideration."

"What was it you wanted to see Gaines for?" she asked.

He glanced at her with a quick appraisal of her thought. He did not know that her mind had fired at the sight of the red mare to a thought of his fearless dexterity, passed to a recollection of the dangers that beset him, and thus arrived at the remembrance of the new development which set him seeking Gaines.

Yet he did know that her question was laden with anxiety for him, and he was glad of it. For the first time in his lonely life he knew the exhilaration which sympathy engenders. He knew a man's peculiar satisfaction in the knowledge that another shares his life and trembles with his fortunes in the balance.

Characteristically he gave expression to his thoughts in action, and, characteristically his action was unexpected. He strode to the door and threw it open.

"Look here," he said. She came to his side and, following with her eyes his indicating finger, saw that he pointed out the red mare.

"You saw Thunderbolt from the window, didn't you?" he asked her. "But you never believed that she could be ridden here and hitched to a sapling in that manner, did you?"

"I think you work miracles," she replied.

He laughed. His manner was that of a boy, boyishly confident of his prowess.

"Come out and ride her," he said.

She glanced at him in wonder.

"But you don't understand," she protested. "You're the only man in the world who's ever tamed that horse. I've done some riding myself, but she'd kill me as if I were a fly."

He laughed.

"You don't understand," he mocked happily. "Thunderbolt is my horse. She won't throw any one I tell her not to. Come on!"

They approached the horse together, and Hazel noticed that Thunderbolt no longer fretted wickedly against the bridle which held her proud head to the tree, but instantly became quiescent when Cosgrove drew to her side and placed a soothing hand upon her neck.

"Don't chafe; don't fret, little one," he admonished her gently; and he unlashed the leather as he spoke. "Here's a lady come to ride you. Here's a friend. Speak to her, Hazel."

Hazel had never been at a loss with horses, and something in Cosgrove's manner assured her that this fierce red mare was now amenable. She stroked the velvet muzzle.

"Good morning, Thunderbolt," she said. "He says that I'm to ride you. Will you let me ride you, Thunderbolt?"

Thunderbolt tossed her head and shook it vigorously.

"That means yes!" laughed Cosgrove. "You're not frightened, are you? You mustn't ride her if you're frightened."

She laughed into his eyes.

"No," she said. "I'm not frightened."

"Then mount." He held the stirrup for her, and held the reins while she mounted, speaking softly to the horse. "Gently, Thunderbolt," he said. "This is a lady who mounts you; a lady who is our friend."

Gently he placed the reins over the animal's curved neck and into Hazel's hand.

"Ride gently," he said. And to Hazel's intense amazement the horse she had expected to plunge or rear stood quietly beneath her touch, awaiting her command. She urged Thunderbolt forward, and the lovely creature stepped out with that enchanting trust in her rider that confidence in a good horseman's direction which makes an intelligent mount the most delightful companion in the world.

Hazel drew Thunderbolt up to a trot. The mare answered beautifully. She raised her to a canter and went loping away down the road. While she rode, enraptured by the animal's easy gait and the tang of the morning air, she noticed that the bridle and its metals had been cleaned and polished. She saw that the cruel curb bit had been replaced by one of more com-

fortable design and a snaffle made it possible to govern the horse in a gentle manner.

She drew up the snaffle, letting out the curb somewhat, and was amazed at the pleased fling of the head with which Thunderbolt indicated her appreciation. Thunderbolt cantering on a snaffle! The thought was too much for Hazel's humor. She laughed delightedly and, pirouetting the red mare, she came galloping back to where Cosgrove awaited her.

As Hazel pulled Thunderbolt in, the mare, suddenly feeling the curb, bucked and pranced sideways. Instantly Cosgrove seized the bridle rein and brought the animal, prancing, to a standstill. He did not fail to notice the cool adroitness of the girl's horsemanship as she balanced in that sudden plunge, and he was all admiration as she resumed her place beside him.

"That was lovely," he said. "I'm sorry Thunderbolt bucked. But I've only had the training of her for a few hours. We rode a lot last night, and I've had her out since four this morning. She's the most intelligent horse I've ever worked with."

"Now tell me why you are looking for Gaines," she said.

He laughed.

"That's why I asked you to ride Thunderbolt," he explained. "Lederer's trying to get a warrant against me now for horse stealing."

Hazel's eyes grew wide.

"For horse stealing! The man must be mad!"

"He is. Mad as all get out. But the point is, I don't want to lose Thunderbolt. She's mine now, and I can't let them brutalize her again. I'd as soon put a woman to a plow as to put her into the rodeo work again!"

"Of course!" she cried. "Thunderbolt is yours by right of conquest! He'll never get that warrant!"

"That's what I'm out to arrange!"

She stood in silence for a moment, watching him.

"And while you arrange it, you have to neglect your case!"

"Yes," he admitted ruefully. "I know. And I ought not to spare a minute from the old law books. But, Hazel, this horse is never going back to them! Never! It's too much. That horse is a friend of mine now and to give her up, why, it would be like surrendering—"

He stopped gazing at her with blazing eyes.

"—You!" he cried.

"What do you mean?" she faltered.

"Yes, like surrendering you!" he insisted. "You, who have given me friendship where I least hoped to find it. Friendship, Hazel, that nothing in the world would take away from me. And they can't have Thunderbolt, either!"

She was fixing him now with a strange smile. It was happiness, that smile, a happiness which filled her body and glowed in her heart with a warm and secret glory. And with that happiness came a certain knowledge that she could help him.

"Go back to your books, old Hair Trigger Harry," she scoffed. "Only walk back. Leave your beautiful red Thunderbolt here and I'll promise that she's yours, legally and unredeemably before the day's over.

"What are you going to do?" he asked her.

"Don't stand asking questions." She knew now that she had him completely in her power. She knew the last infinitesimal degree of the strength she could wield against him. "Go and do what you're told."

Then the importance of the work she urged him to resume fell upon her with its cloud of impending tragedy.

"You ought to be at them now!" she cried. "You have said yourself how little time there is to prepare. Oh, don't let this matter of a horse interfere. Keep your mind and your work on the charge they've got against you. They'll move heaven and earth to convict you now!"

He frowned, knowing the truth of her words.

"But I can't let them take her—" he began miserably.

"Then trust me!" she cried. Impulsively she stepped to him and grasped his arm and the lapel of his coat.

"Trust me!" she cried. "I swear I'll bring her back! Trust me to do it!"

He placed his hands abruptly about her shoulders. He would have seized her and pressed her in the warmth of his embrace. But he did not. He merely held her firmly for an instant, peering into her eyes, and the pressure of his hands was the only caress he vouchsafed her.

"I trust you," he said simply. And the pressure of his hands caressed her, his voice caressed her. It was enough.

"And now," he said. "I must get back to my books." He stroked the muzzle of Thunderbolt. He took Hazel's hand in his and thus caused her to stroke the horse's muzzle, too.

"Be gentle with her," he said softly. And his voice caressed them both.

CHAPTER XX.

PASSING THE BUCK.

WERT FARLEY heard the details of the dissolution which had befallen Cliff Lederer's proposed lynching party when he met his accomplice at lunch the day following. He made no effort to conceal his contempt of the men who had backed down under the threats which Lederer mendaciously described Cosgrove as having made.

But neither his contempt for the weaknesses of his contemporaries nor the bluster with which he greeted Lederer's attempts to evade responsibility served to cover his disappointment in Cosgrove's escape. For Cosgrove had spoken truth when he had promised Farley more law than he desired.

Wert Farley had no confidence in the law. He feared it more direly than the circumstances warranted, because he suspected its power to uncover much of his past which he would prefer to lie fallow. Knowing nothing of the law, he was uneasy in the face of it, as a sneak thief is uneasy before the gaze of an honest man.

"But we still got our case against him!" Lederer said vindictively. "If we can't hang him like he ought to be hung, we can still hang him under the law!"

Farley turned on him with a snarl. Lederer had as much as flung his secret fears into his face.

"Under the law!" he rasped. "Huh! That's talkin' sense! D' you know what the law is, Cliff? D' you know what yo're playin' with when you play with the law?"

"No. An' I don't care. The lawyers do that for us, don't they?"

"Yeah," Farley's voice was deeply sarcastic. "They do that for us! They argue an' talk, an' make out points of law. But it ain't them that settles the case! The ones what decide whether Cosgrove gets his or not, are the men who decided last night that he wasn't goin' to hang! That's who! It's Slade an' Web, an' them that makes the last decision. Read up on it! It's public opinion that counts, an' last night we had public opinion with us! How much are they with us to-day?"

"Shucks!" Lederer filled the air with curses. "Webb, an' them, they ain't this whole township or county by a long shot."

"No. They ain't this whole township or county. An' they ain't the judge an' jury, neither. But let me ask you this: Have you been into town this morning like I have? Have you listened to every damned fool in the street talkin' about the case like I have? Have you seen how that rotten gang of weak-kneed Sunday school teachers gets all knotted up in conversation with Gaines an' Webb an' Slade around the Massey House, like I have?"

"Shore, I was in town myself."

"Then yo're either a liar or yo're a damn fool—no, don't get play-acting. If you went downtown an' didn't find out that every son of a busted flush in the county is all riled up because of this party you didn't pull orf last night, then you ought to be corralled with the unweaned calves. They've changed their opinion on this case so that we'll be darned lucky if they don't get up a lynchin' bee for Cosgrove's sake an' make us the guests of honor! That's how much public opinion Webb an' them coyotes can make!"

Lederer scowled down upon his shining boots and set his hands to writhing one within the other, like restless serpents enfolding.

"He came here like a play actor," he growled. Then, remembering the effect of

Cosgrove's coming on the chosen instruments of justice. "The fools!" he bellowed. "The —— fools!" He denounced them in a convulsion of profanity.

"In a trial by jury," said Farley. "We'd have to do a hell of a lot of proving him guilty to get a conviction."

Silently Lederer scowled at his boots which were stretched out on the table before him.

"Well, what 're you goin' to do?" he growled.

Farley glowered at him somberly.

"That's speakin' sense," he said without geniality. "Likewise, I've been chewin' on that idea longer 'n I like to think of." He arose suddenly to his feet. "What you got to do!" he cried with abrupt fire in his voice; "is to get him out of this town!"

Lederer stared up at him with brows ludicrously uplifted.

"How's that?" he said.

"Get him out of town!" answered the other excitedly. "He's out on bail, an' in three days he's bound to report at the court house for his trial! Well, what if he don't turn up? What if this lily white hero that's too good to hang, and too brave to shoot men that's unarmed, should turn yellow when it came to a show down an' run away? Where 'd public opinion be then?"

"All against him!" cried Lederer, who began to see.

"Shore. All against him! An' that's what you got to do. Get some of our boys together an' kidnap this yellow livered skunk. Take him out in the mountains in a car an' leave him to walk home. When he don't turn up for his trial, they'll take it as a confession of guilt. They'll decide he ran away. Then he'll be lucky if he ain't brought in at the end of a rope!"

Lederer grinned appreciatively

"That's a high up idea, Wert," he said. "But how about you takin' the post of honor this time. Seems to me I get all the dirty work, and it's damn' little thanks I get if anything goes wrong. Now I'm thinkin' this is a job for you, Wert."

Farley swore heavily.

"You seven different kinds of assorted fool!" he barked. "Where the hell 'd we be if the case comes up an' I'm orf in the mountains. It's just as important for me to be on hand as it is for him! You do the job because yo're the only one that can. Me, I've got to stick around and steer things straight in the court room."

"Now don't that sound nice!" sneered Lederer warmly. "You stand 'round passin' out the cigars while I ride out into the brush on a job that will fix me for tar an' feathers if the fools that fell for Cosgrove last night find it out!"

"Well, tell me, who else is there to do it!"

"Who else is there to hand out the cigars at the court house?"

"I suppose you think you could! A fine sharp to talk with the lawyers after the mess you made of things last night!"

"All right, you pull this game yoreself, an' see how easy it is. You think he can't play rough when he wants to! Well, I'm tellin' you, you'd know better if you wasn't too damn' careful to mix it up with him yoreself!"

"You mean yo're scared to work this game?"

"I mean if Brad Cosgrove's goin' to be kidnaped, you can do the dirty work yoreself!"

"Don't be an utter fool, Cliff!"

"That's just how I stand. Not fool enough to pack a runnin' iron to smooth off yore brands for you!"

"You mean you won't see this through!"

"I mean I won't!"

Farley stood in magnificent indecision. Lederer brought his feet to the floor with a crash and sneered up at him with narrowed eyes. It appeared as if the wolf and the bear were at last at each other's throats.

"By God, Cliff—" Farley's voice rose ominously, as a siren whistle rises. "*Now who in hell is that?*"

The sound of hoof beats ascending the slope from the road in an even gallop took both men abruptly to the door. Splendidly and with high spirited gait there came from around the house a red mare with a girl in the saddle whose face was flushed and whose hair was riotous in the wind.

"Good God!" breathed Lederer. "It's Hazey—she's riding Thunderbolt!"

It was as though he looked upon a wild and impossible vision; a thing of troubled dreams.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TEMPERAMENTAL THUNDERBOLT.

THEY came down the steps to greet her, striding out over the yellow grasses in the sunlight with an effect of resentment which was implicit in their bulky bodies, their heavy, sullen tread. Hazel sat her saddle and looked down upon them. She discerned in Lederer's eyes a dark mixture of baffled rage and wonderment.

"So he sent you back with it!" he exclaimed, endeavoring to cover his emotions with a sneer.

"If you're talking of Thunderbolt," she said. "He allowed me to ride her out here. But I must take her back again." Very easily she dismounted and, throwing the reins, turned to her uncle.

"I should think that Mr. Cosgrove would have taught you to use more sense," she remarked pointedly.

"What are you talkin' about?" he snarled.

"About Thunderbolt. For some mad reason you've let Cliff go raving around town trying to get a warrant against Brad, for stealing this horse. For *stealing her!* You must be crazy!"

Farley turned to Lederer at that, his face ablaze with ugly consternation.

"Stealin' Thunderbolt!" he rasped. "Good Godfrey! You didn't tell me nothin' about Thunderbolt!"

Lederer flashed back upon him like an irritated animal.

"Don't be a fool!" he snapped. "Can't you see Hazey standing there with Thunderbolt at her heels! Didn't you hear her say it was Cosgrove let her ride him! How d' you suppose he got hold of the horse if he didn't steal her!"

But quite reasonably, Farley could not believe him.

"Ride Thunderbolt?" he roared. "But there ain't no man or woman in this State can ride Thunderbolt!"

"There is now," said Hazel, quietly. "And he didn't steal her, either. If you want to know how Brad Cosgrove came to possess Thunderbolt, Uncle Wert, it was through the idiocy of Cliff Lederer. Yes, idiocy!" she cried, cutting short Lederer's attempt to snarl a protest. "Or thick-headed cruelty. You were crazy enough to believe that you could gather enough men to hang Cosgrove, and you might have succeeded if it could have been done without them seeing him. Do you suppose any sane man could look on Mr. Cosgrove beside such a ruffian as you are, and hang him on *your* evidence?"

Lederer broke in upon her then with curses.

"Shut up, Cliff!" snapped Farley. "What's this got to do with the horse?" he demanded of the girl.

"Everything. It was Cliff's high minded idea that he'd hang his man by putting him on Thunderbolt's back with a rope 'round his neck and let Thunderbolt throw him to his death!" These words she brought out in a cold staccato, between teeth which were clenched with white hot contempt and anger. "The manly touch!" she cried. Again Lederer would have interrupted her, but she swept on.

"And then he showed how little he's learned from the experience that put his arm in a sling. He dared Mr. Cosgrove to show that he was the equal of the men who met to hang him! Thunderbolt was outside, and Cosgrove proved then and there that he was the better man in the saddle, as well as in every other respect. He mounted Thunderbolt and rode her. After that he took her home and trained her.

"All Cliff can do is to make himself the laughing stock of Manford by trying to accuse him of horse stealing. Horse stealing!" She laughed with real mirth in the face of Lederer's anger. "You may not show up as much of a man, Cliff, but you're at least a funny one."

If Farley had not intervened, Lederer would have struck her for that. He plunged forward with his face purple and his clenched hand upraised, while she lifted her quirt to meet him. But Farley intervened with a short jab of his arm which jolted

Lederer from his balance, so that he staggered for a moment and stood still, fixing her with his wrath.

"Those are lies!" he cried. "All lies! And if you think to take that horse back to him to-day, you're mistaken. Thunderbolt belongs to this ranch—"

"And one third of this ranch belongs to me!" she cried.

"We ain't givin' away no horses, though," growled Farley suddenly. "You, Hazel, you'd best leave affairs like this to Cliff an' me. Cliff was a fool to play for a warrant after makin' the break he did last night. But Thunderbolt, she stays here."

"And I say she doesn't!" Hazel declared. She stepped backward so that with one hand she could touch the glistening neck of the great red mare, and Thunderbolt, as though conscious that they discussed her, twisted her head toward the girl.

"You ain't got nothin' to say about it!" blurted Lederer.

"I have!" she cried. "I have, because I'm the only one of the ranch that can ride this horse! That makes her mine, doesn't it? She's mine, and I give her to Mr. Cosgrove!"

"Oh, you do?" sneered her uncle. "You give her to Cosgrove because now that she's broke to the saddle, you're the only one who can ride her?" He laughed shrewdly. "Shucks, girl, don't you suppose I know horses? There ain't nobody but what can ride that mare now."

At this rebuff she started back a moment, her confidence dashed. Then, with eyes blazing, she swept to the attack again.

"All right!" she cried. "Ride her!" She stepped away from Thunderbolt's head.

Farley grunted.

"Hmph," he said. "You got the Farley bluff, all right. Ride that horse into the stable, Cliff."

He gave his order with absolute confidence in his diagnosis. Thunderbolt was a broken horse. He regretted it, for he knew her rodeo worth as an outlaw, but he wasn't going to let his niece get away with this sheer bluff whereby she sought to cheat him.

Lederer, catching his confidence, strode to Thunderbolt with a smile of self assurance. With a chuckle he emphasized the fact that the red mare quietly permitted him to mount, and the further fact that, when he was in the saddle, Thunderbolt stood submissively awaiting his direction brought forth from him a triumphant comment upon Hazel's boast.

"So yo're the only one that can ride her!" he gloated, and drawing up the reins sharply, determined to dash to the stables in a proud gallop.

It was in that moment that catastrophe overtook him. Thunderbolt, at the sharp touch of the bit against her bars, was transformed from a peaceful and splendid horse into a raging, and magnificent demon. They saw a swirl of dust, a twisting, beautiful red body that writhed between earth and air like some monster of the firmament.

And they saw a limp body that, after a series of sickening jolts, sailed forth from the vortex of that tumult like a sack of potatoes and landed with a thud in the dust at their feet. This accomplished, Thunderbolt placidly trotted back to a place at Hazel's side, and stood there, awaiting her good pleasure.

Hazel gazed down upon the fallen and disillusioned man for a moment with eyes afire with contempt, then, without a word, she turned to the complacent Thunderbolt, stroked her velvet nose with a quick touch of her hand, whispered some word to her and deftly mounted to the saddle.

"When you can send me a man who can ride her back," she cried to Farley, who stood, thunderstruck, "then I'll talk over who has a right to this horse. Till then she's mine! And while she's mine she will stay in the keeping of the only man who can control her!"

She gathered the reins and set Thunderbolt to a gallop which swept her clattering around the house and out of sight. Farley, standing aghast where she had left him, and Lederer, half stunned upon the ground, heard the departing rattle of Thunderbolt's hoofs. After that sound was merged

into the deathly silence of the air, Lederer arose slowly to his feet.

He stood glowering upon Farley and cursed. He cursed loudly and fluently. He called upon all the blasphemy he knew. Even Farley was shocked by his companion's demoniacal tirade.

"I guess there's one field you can meet Cosgrove on an' beat him both ways from the middle," he snarled contemptuously.

"I'll beat him!" swore Lederer. "I'll fix him! I'll fix him for the buzzards an' coyotes to pick at!" He glared at Farley, furiously. "You talk an' plan an' sneak around hidin' guns an' such, but when it comes to actin', you ain't there! Well, I don't want you to be there! It's me that's goin' to finish orf this garbage! Me! If there's kidnapin' to be done, if we're goin' to trick him, or frame him, or knife him, it's me that will do it! You keep out of it. Wert! You leave him to me! He's mine!"

And as he plunged onward into a stream of obscenity Farley grinned. He had use for Lederer; some man must be relied upon to see that Cosgrove never turned up for his trial; that his bail was forfeited, his honor blackened, his innocence cast in doubt. And he knew now that Lederer would do it. He knew that he could trust Lederer to do the job.

But he wished that Cosgrove had not been so adroit in the taming of Thunderbolt. There seemed something uncannily superior about this dapper youth; something which fired him to excel in all things the men Farley must rely upon to overcome him. Farley endeavored to vanquish his uneasiness with a recollection of the missing gun, of Cosgrove's indubitable presence in Manford the night of Mase Farley's death. But it was in vain.

He felt his confidence waning in the craft wherewith he had spread his net. He, who had been honestly convinced that Cosgrove had murdered his brother, felt an incredible doubt in the back of his mind that this invincible, dauntless youth could have ever been guilty of such a crime.

And then he gazed upon the fire of vengeance which gleamed in Lederer's eyes, and was consoled. In that smoldering hatred, he saw the opportunity to fan a flame which would consume Cosgrove. He must see that it was guided to burn aright.

"Don't kill him," he adjured Lederer. "Don't kill him unless yo're sure it can never be traced. Just keep him out of town till the trial, cover up your own tracks careful, and they'll hang him all right an' legal."

CHAPTER XXII.

MARAUDERS.

THEY came at night.

As the date of his trial drew nearer, Cosgrove devoted himself almost exclusively to the preparation of his case. Gaines had procured the services of Riordan, an accomplished lawyer politician from an adjoining county, and Cosgrove spent many hours a day with him reviewing vast numbers of cases, gathering innumerable precedents to vouch for the defense which he would offer, and preparing that defense to the last and most intricate detail.

It was decided that Cosgrove should take the brunt of the battle himself, while Riordan would act in the capacity of advisory counsel, giving the case the benefit of his long experience in local courts; his expert knowledge of procedure in halls of justice where "men wore pants, and didn't take no back talk from judges, or lawyer sharps." It was declared by Gaines, and humorously conceded by Cosgrove, that this branch of Riordan's knowledge would be useful in the extreme.

Hazel Farley, troubled with the fear that Cosgrove's midnight vigils alone in the isolation of his little house might expose him to such violence as he had so splendidly rebuffed that night at the Bar Nothing ranch, had insisted that he take into his household a man Friday. Thus, after Riordan had departed after an evening of tireless research, Cosgrove was not left alone, but pursued his studies far into the night, while an extraordinary series of grunts and snorts resounding from interior fastnesses bore witness to the sleeping presence in the house of a negro cook and utility man named Samuel Dooley.

In addition to this safeguard, it was Hazel's custom to drive over with Gaines in the evening and visit the worker, on which occasions she achieved a cool, crisp efficiency in running to earth cross references and points of law which won Riordan's respect, and caused Cosgrove to gaze at her with wide eyed admiration.

The night before the date of trial, she had, of course come over to do the finishing work on the many pages of typing that contained the results of their labors. It was past midnight when Cosgrove called a halt to the work.

"The defense rests!" he cried: and taking from her hand the voluminous notes which she had typed, he placed them in a neat pile on the table, and seizing her, protesting in his arms, executed a dance around the room. Gaines looked at him with eyebrows aloft and eyes popping. Riordan giggled and flung himself into the morris chair.

> "We go to court to-morrow!
> We go to court to-morrow!
> What ere impends, we'll still be friends,
> And go to court to-morrow!"

—sang Cosgrove idiotically, and with a triumphant whirl he swung the flushed, laughing girl away from him, and pounded on the table with a book.

"Shucks," grinned Gaines. "We'll all go loco to-morrow, if you act thataway."

Cosgrove, his back against the table, beamed upon him with eyes of blue fire. His pale face was radiant with the exuberance of the impending battle. His voice rang with a confidence that made this fight for life or death, or long imprisonment, a veritable celebration.

"Gaines, my boy!" he cried. "In that little pile of books and papers, we've got the whole thing sewn up! When we go into court to-morrow, we'll be in a position to give them more law than this county has ever seen or heard before. Yes, I know what you're going to say, it won't be law that'll sway these men, it'll be fireworks and facts. Well, we'll give 'em those, too!

"And the jury is half the fight. We more than half won our case when we got Slade into the jury box, and I'm darned sure that there isn't one of the twelve whose got any particular love for Lederer or Farley. I tell you we've got a wonderful case. They may draw it out for a few weeks, but if we're careful, and keep our heads, we'll win!"

"You'll have a sweet time overcoming Kober's evidence regarding that missing gun," brooded Gaines.

"And they'll have a sweet time overcoming mine!" cried Hazel.

Cosgrove frowned.

"Well, we're not calling you, unless it's absolutely necessary, remember," he reminded her.

"You can't keep me from saying what I know!" she said warmly. "So just see that you don't leave me out of it too long!"

Cosgrove leaped into action suddenly.

"Now come on!" he cried. "Get out of here, all of you! You're all to go directly home and get a good night's sleep. The case is called for nine-thirty, and all be at the court house at nine o'clock sharp. A prize will be given for the little girl or boy who turns up earliest!"

"I'll sleep in my boots!" laughed Hazel.

"No facetious remarks, please. And no loafing. Come along! Here's you hat, Mr. Gaines. Here's the door, Mr. Riordan. If you don't move along, you'll be keeping me up past my bedtime."

He conducted them genially out upon the porch. Lederer, who had been patiently watching for that moment, saw them emerge, as he stood immovable in the black shadow of a poplar tree which stood beside the road some twenty yards away. He saw Gaines and Riordan walk to the car below the porch, and with a resurgence of the strange hatred which the sight of Cosgrove and Hazel in proximity stirred in him, he saw the girl stand close to Cosgrove in the doorway, silhouetted against the light.

He could not hear what they said, for they spoke in low, soft accents, but he raged as he stood there watching them, restraining an impulse to stride forth and violently separate the two. He consoled himself with a thought of what the night would bring. And while he thus consoled himself, Hazel spoke with Cosgrove.

"I'm more glad to see this thing come

to a head than I ought to be," she said. "I've been afraid."

"Nothing to be afraid of," he smiled, uneasily. This was a phase of her interest in him which he would gladly have foregone.

"No. Evidently not," she admitted. "But it's been terrible to leave you alone here. I've often thought of you in this place, all alone at night. You see I know how Cliff Lederer hates you."

He laughed reassuringly.

"There wasn't any need to worry. Even Lederer is sane enough to know that his best chance of hurting me lays in being good. Since that lynching party he must know that public opinion is all for a fair trial.

"Why, even the *Argus* has swung round. Did you see that editorial against methods of violence?" He laughed. "When the *Argus* turns tail like that, it's easy enough for even Lederer to see how the land lies."

"Well, I happen to know how insane Cliff can be when he flies off the handle. But it's over now." She gazed at him for a moment speculatively. Then: "Good night," she said.

"Good night."

Still she paused there in the doorway with him.

"Oh, I can't tell you how happy I am to-night!" she cried.

And she was, indeed happy. There was a singular sense of victory already hovering in the air. They both felt it. It was like a high climax, a peak of their achievement. He seized her abruptly and kissed her lips.

"And I, too!" he cried. And then stood, amazed at this thing which he had done. But she smiled. She smiled with no reproach. She smiled happily.

"Good night," she whispered, and turned to descend the steps.

"Good night," he mumbled, and stood, transfixed, gazing after her.

He saw her step into the car, and he saw the car roll away. Long after it was gone he stood there in the doorway gazing after it; then he turned abruptly and reëntered the house, closing the door behind him. And all these things Lederer saw from his hiding place beside the poplar tree.

Cosgrove stood in the living room of his little frame house and gazed about him. The room was very dusty and disheveled, for it had not been put in order for all the days throughout which it had borne the scattered evidences of his tireless work. Now with those evidences cleared away, it appeared inexplicably bare and lonely. It bore the aspect of a festal hall after the party is over.

Cosgrove stood in the middle of it and smiled. He was remembering the moment when he had kissed her, and it was sweet in his memory. His mind seemed fascinated by that moment, so that to everything else it was blank and impervious. He stood with his thought suspended upon that ineffable moment. It pleased him immeasurably.

Had he obeyed the impulse which it stirred in him he would have followed her, if he had yielded to the desire in him, he would have sought immediately a repetition of that moment. But he did not. He stood quite still instead, a broad smile playing about his lips, held on the thread of recollection.

From interior depths came the sound of dismal groaning, of rhythmic grunts and snorts. Samuel Dooley, devoted to sound sleep, was oblivious to the emotions which filled his master's breast.

From outside a long, drawn whistle sounded. It was a strange thing that a man should whistle out there in the completely uninhabited spaces of the prairie, and Cosgrove, hearing the whistle, subconsciously wondered at it, as he was to remember later. But in the preoccupation of this moment it served only to recall him from his reverie.

Putting the dream resolutely out of his mind, he flung himself into the chair at the table, and plunged into a last reading of the papers he had prepared. Becoming engrossed in them he forgot his loneliness, forgot the lateness of the hour, forgot sleep itself. And as he sat there in the night, they came.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

Page Romeo!

By BEATRICE ASHTON VANDEGRIFT

DREAMS! They is all kinds of 'em. Dreams induced by midnight mixtures of strawberries and shrimp, dreams that percolate from the poppy pipe, dreams drawed from the sleep-slipping fists of Dempsey. But the greatest dreams are them that lingers round loneliness.

Ever since I was sixteen, when ma so lovingly done up my cinnamon mop for the first time in a Pish knot, then sighed and slept and was took on a one-way trip out to that little myrtle mound in Brooklyn where pop soon tagged after as though he didn't want her sleeping alone—ever since then I dreamed of a Romance.

It would be like Romeo and Juliet.

Some day *he* would come to me whilst I was dispensing shaving brushes and cologne in the basement of Saltz's store, and I would glance up, blushing, from a " charge and take " and call hopeful above the roar of the onrushing bargain hunters that beat against my counter like a high tide, " Oh, Romeo, where art thou, Romeo?"

And he would come rushing in on the crest of the mob and leap the dividing line what separated our two true hearts and tell me, loverlike, " Wouldst I was that pencil in thy hand and that hand behind thy ear."

Then would I ignore a hundred voices volleying for attention and ask him, shy, " Dost love me, Romeo?"

And he would declare, " Aye, fair Juliet, by yon moon-faced clock."

" Nay, Romeo," I would chide him, " swear not by yon moon-faced clock. She is not constant, but often pointeth four when shouldst be closing time."

Then would he stand beside me and gather me in his arms, while everything around us would melt away like the misty background in a movie fade out—screeching women shoppers and Levi, the floor stalker, with his sleuthy eyes, and that one awful hour till closing time—all would melt as I did in my lover's arms.

After that— I couldn't imagine.

Can you focus Romeo and Juliet on their tin wedding?

I couldn't. I couldn't imagine no more than that one long clinch that would last down the ages.

I was nineteen, but he hadn't come. The girls told me I ought to be out looking for him. There was plenty of Romeos along Broadway, they said. All I had to do was to change my old soft slippers at night for a pair of snappy French heelers and trip out to make some Rudolph fall. They said I would find one, too, if it come to that, waiting outside in one of them yellow jackets that lines the curb as we files out nights. But I notices them that fools around yellow jackets usually gets stung.

So I waited.

And watched the rows of them fussy little French heels that squatted in the bottoms of the lockers from nine till five, all set for tired feet to talcum themselves into and twinkle out on the Milky Way among the other stars.

But me, I spurred my slip-slap old Susannas right up to the home door, alias Mom Gilman's boredom house—rooms by the week and meals also weakly.

And still I dreamed, on through the morning strap hangings and evening seat rushes, through the long day at the store that sped like a Scotchman's courtship, through the cheese sandwiches nibbled between C. O. D.'s in the basement cafeteria, still I dreamed of the wonderful man that was going to insert the romance of the ages into my dull life.

Finally he come.

I seen him first, standing at the end of the counter and pawing over our loose imitation French ivory as timid as a terrier does a hot penny. He was tall, but stooped a little, as all high guys does nowadays from cheek-to-cheeking with the runty flappers. Yet his gray spring overcoat cascaded natty from his broad shoulders, and he possessed that species of confiding, boyish face that would cause any Broadway baby to toss away the lipstick for the broomstick and give up cake eating for cake baking. In fact, just the kind of a man that makes a woman realize her place is in his home.

"Is there anybody waiting around here?" he inquired, pleasant, as he caught my eye—and I, my breath.

"*You* seem to be," I smiled, cleverly sandwiching my yellow pad with carbon. "Be with you in a minute. Just gotta fix up this 'charge and send.'"

"I don't see how you do it," he marveled, parking his elbow on a pile of combs —"add a column of figures that would of stunned Steinmetz, remember the date, wrap up the bundle, answer fool questions and smile—all simultaneous."

"The first four come easy," I sighed. "It's the last that's hard."

"Not for you," he contradicted. "You smile as neat as easy as a—er—dental ad," he finished, gallant.

I thought he was going to pull some real poetic dope or something, but after all, his eyes was so nice and intriguing, it didn't fall so flat at that. And, anyhow, as Mom Gilman so often says when offering the star boarder "adjacent beer" or which ever, "It's the spirit of the thing that counts."

I blushed, bashful, and turned to business.

"Now, what can I show you?" I inquired, brisk.

"That smile again," he insisted, ardent, "right where them two little dimples is planted."

"Humph, they're century plants," I returned, haughty. "Come again in a hundred years."

His face fell at my flipness like a popover in a cold oven.

"Well, then, show me some ivory," he ordered, serious.

"Say, ain't my hat off?" I laughed.

He laughed, too, and the fog of misunderstanding was rent by the breeze of my wit.

So I showed him our wares, and we bent our heads real close—so close that his cheek, blue with a new shave and sweet with the fragrance of lilac, almost touched mine.

"Was it something for yourself, mister?" I probed, taking refuge in impersonalities.

"No," he scowled, perplexed, like all men shoppers is. "What I come for was a kind of bureau set, brush, comb, mirror,

finger nail scissors, shoe hook and button horn—something that 'll look nice for a lady's birthday present."

"A lady!" I murmured. "An old lady, maybe?"

"I said it was for her birthday," he explained, facetious. "Old ladies don't have birthdays."

"Oh, a girl, then," I surmised, my heart hesitating.

"Yeh, about your age."

"A sister?" I continued, hope and fear battling in my bosom.

"Well, she said she'd be one to me if the worse come to the not so good."

"Ah ha," gulped I, flashing a brave, bright beamer, however, "imitation ivory is just the thing for a gent to hand his fiancée."

He looked at me, amused, outa the corner of his merry blue eyes, but didn't say nothing.

"When love is genuine," I concluded, "imitations don't matter."

"Say," he said, smiling quizzical, "you're some little philosopher!"

"Them that deals with joshers has got to be philosophers," I answered, hurt by something I couldn't put my finger on, no more than an itch between the shoulder blades.

Of a sudden he grabbed hold of my palm.

"Say, I bet you're a lonely little devil!" he exclaimed, impulsive.

"Devils ain't lonely," I choked. "It's the angels."

"Don't you ever go out no place?" he inquired, solicitous.

"To the corner drug store and the dairy lunch."

"What do you buy at the drug store and what do you eat at the lunch?" he cross-examined me, boyish yet masterful.

"Tar soap and shredded wheat."

"Great!" he laughed, gleeful. "If you had said lipstick and chocolate éclairs I would of thought you was spoofing about being lonely. But being the psychologist I am, I knows that nothing spells loneliness like tar soap and shredded wheat."

"Now, do you want a round mirror with the set, or oblong?" I resumed my salesmanship, huffy at thinking he was kidding me.

He bent close.

"Any kind—that will mirror life to you—as it is," he whispered.

"I guess a square one's the best, then," I mused, thoughtful.

"You kid, you!" he muttered, terrifyingly sudden and so earnest my throat trembled like a tuning fork when you strike the right note.

I fingered the ivory, preoccupied. Old Levi's look was on me.

"What 're you going to take?" I asked, short. "La Belle or La Paris?"

His eyes was steady and very brown.

"I've decided I won't get none at all," he said, slow. "I'm taking something with me instead that ain't no imitation—and it's for myself."

He whipped off his hat and smiled a smile that lit up his face like Broadway on a Saturday night.

"But I'll be back for more!" he promised, and went.

II.

THAT night, wending my way to the homeward subway, my feet was almost winged, and the spring sunset that shimmered over the city seemed like the glittering gold curtain of a swell vaudeville act.

And when I jammed myself into that underground cattle car, and won, by right of knee and elbow, a choice position against an ambitious guy who was trying to eat peanuts and losing half of 'em in the brim of a jane's hat that was tucked like a bib under his chin—I actually rejoiced in that sweet, close contact with my fellow men. For the roaring, snoring old subway seemed like a train de luxe straight to paradise.

In the three evening hours before flopping into the ferns, them three precious hours that stands out like bright streamers on the unending wheel of drab industry, I dreamed dreams that seemed almost real.

He said he would be back!

I excavated a gay string of beads from the bottom bureau drawer that mom used to love to don when pop wasn't looking. Red for romance! I'd wear them wrapped three times around my neck where they'd

scintillate against my old black crêpe like a row of cranberries on a muddy bog. If only Levi's sleuth eyes wouldn't ferret 'em out! Well, let him. He couldn't do much more than bounce me, and I felt that exhilarated I was willing to be a rubber ball.

I'd press out the old crêpe neat, don the beauteous beads and let fate do her funniest.

I slapped a summoning stroke on Miss Mendel's door, Miss Mendel being the only guest in Mom Gilman's house what has succeeded in preserving an iron intact from the knowing nose of that foxy terror who can sniff a burned fuse quicker'n a cat can sardines. Miss Mendel, with her innocent look of a two-day kitten, ain't never been suspected of doing nothing worse than perusing the marriage, birth and death notes in the Sunday *Times*, or holding an occasional petting party with her favorite hot-water bottle.

I rapped twice, and she peered out, cautious, her pale blue kimona hugged tight against her skinny chest.

"Hey, Miss Mendel!" I commenced in a whisper. "Can I borrow the loan of your iron?"

She looked up quick, shooting a glance down the hall and back again like a conscientious usher before mittening a forbidden tip, then motioned me to meander within, while she dove under the mattress.

And as I waited I gazed careless about the room, at the funny photos of ginks that would make the Smith Brothers look like Yale freshmen—at the fussy little reading table that teetered on long legs like a new calf—at the book that laid open under the kerosene lamp.

I turned the pages, idly interested, and a rose tumbled out, just a funny little old rose, brown and withered now, though it must of once been red. And the book was called "Love Sonnets of an Earlier Day."

Can you match that?

The world is sure getting funny. First thing you know Bull Montana 'll be caught perusing "Ways to Preserve Manly Beauty"; Sophie Tucker 'll be singing "Love's Old Sweet Song," and Mack Sennett 'll be producing films on "The Wonder of the Human Soul."

Well, well, as the proverbs put it, blunders will never cease!

Inside a month, however, old Miss Mendel was as far from my mind as sudden murder or a real seal coat—I was an engaged woman!

It come one May evening when spring breathed soft and warm over the city, and the tremble of the L swelled with a vibration of a mighty harp. And all New York rose like one great stool where sits the Artist who paints the evening sky.

He had come back, every day during that month, to wait at the door of the store for me. And it smoothed away the fuss and fever and weariness to know that he'd be there. If the other girls elbowed me rough as they passed, what did it matter? There'd be an elbow waiting to help me home. And if the wild women shoppers give me lip—I remembered other lips that spoke kind words. So the day would pass like a short, stormy sleep, and the real day come with the evening.

III.

It was the tenth of May.

The sun was dipping over the Hudson in a Turkish bath of haze as we L'd to the home door.

"Can't I come up?" asked Dave, twisting his hat.

"I don't know," I murmured, shy.

"Just for a minute?"

"What's the use? A minute's only sixty seconds."

"Well, it only takes ten—to put a man out."

"But you see, we ain't got no referee—no chaperon," I protested, allowing my brain to think deliberate.

"When folks love each other a chaperon's about as necessary as a crutch to a centipede with a broken ankle. He *can* get along all right without it, if he wants to."

"I s'pose we can sit out on the fire escape."

"Fine," he agreed, boosting me up Mom Gilman's brown stone steps. "I'd sit on a steam heater—with you."

I steered him hasty through my dinky

little room, past the tousled bed, the dresser caked with powder like a skating rink with ice—past the clothesline that stretched from the closet hook to the gas jet whereon things was hanging that I'd forgot was hanging when I invited my gentleman friend to make a detour through my boodoir. But I steered him safely by and we settled ourselves as comfy as two milk bottles on the fire-escape grating.

A violin was playing somewhere—thin, high notes that soared and took my heart with 'em. And in my throat was a queer choking.

It's coming! It's coming!

Dave shifted a geranium pot to one side and eased himself over. But I looked straight ahead, and over the chimneys the sky burned with red that trembled like a beating heart—till smoke fingers curled up to erase the colors from the day.

Still I didn't say nothing.

The violin had ceased, but beneath us come the clatter and tinkle of evening dishes and somebody whistled, passionate:

"It ain't a-gonna rain no more, no more,
It ain't a-gonna rain no more.
How the heck you gonna wash you neck?
It ain't a-gonna rain no more!"

So sweet it was, so romantic, my bosom bulged with something that would of filled the whole world if I had let it go.

Then, down in the dark, deep court below that shone with lights like a millionaire's private pool, come a long, monotonous monotone. I thought at first it was the scissor grinder, but it was too well oiled for that.

"Ro-ses!" it called in accents that wailed through the night air like the wind in a gutterpipe. "Ni-ice, r-red ro-ses!"

Dave bristled, attentive.

"Ni-ice, r-red ro-ses!" continued the voice, with syllables so sweet they would lure a bee away from the hive. "Buy ni-ice, r-ripe, r-red roses for da sweetheart. On'y fi' cents da piece!"

"Want one, Tessie?" asked Dave, as careless as Morgan.

"How you gonna get it?" I asked, measuring five stories underneath us with a doubtful eye.

"The way I get anything I want," stated Dave, alert. "See and sabe."

He snapped into it, exhilarated, and commenced backing down the iron ladder like an ape, only inconveniencing one geranium pot *en route*. I watched him, admiring. Climbing come to him as natural as to a tomato vine. My wonderful man!

And as I hung expectant on my balcony, a sweet, calm feeling sugarcoated my soul. This was the romance of the ages! Romeo and Juliet!

Come the soft pad of O'Sullivan heels on the iron ladder, then a dark, curly shock of Irish shingles outlined themselves in the light.

He stood beside me on the rickety landing, and with trembling hands wove the rose in my tangled locks, as I had often wove dreams through the tangled days.

"Oh, Tessie!" he whispered.

"Oh, Dave!"

Then it come.

Over his sweeping shoulder I watched the May moon bust through the maze of alley clotheslines like a bright idea in a cross word puzzle. Close he grabbed me—closer. This was it, then, that one long clinch that would last down the ages!

But it didn't. And we parted.

Down inside me something turned cold.

"I didn't get you no ring," he was apologizing, careless. "Thought I'd salt the simoleons till later on and buy you something useful. Vacuum cleaner or something."

"Vacuum cleaner!" I tittered, the spell dispelled. "Do you mean a shampoo?"

He laughed, too, and grabbed me close again, though it didn't seem the same.

"We'll get married in June," he announced.

"Sounds original to me," I remarked, wondering why my heart wasn't hammering.

Would Romeo have offered his Juliet a vacuum cleaner?

He stayed a while, not talking much, but leaning against my shoulder as though he couldn't do without the touch of it. And all the time, the nearer he got, the lonelier I felt and wanted to cry out desperate, "Oh, Romeo, where art *thou,* Romeo?"

But I convoyed him courteous to the front door, kissed him good night, and finally dumped into the downy as happy as an engaged woman should be—with the rose playing perfume tunes on my pillow.

IV.

COME days that should of been wonderful. And they was, I guess, only—

Dave would wink at waitresses.

He'd do it whenever my eyes was on the Spik omelette or the chicken *à la* Merryland. And I couldn't say nothing to him about it. It would be like asking silly questions at grand opera to bust into the beauty of our love. Yet it hurt me, gripping at the back of my throat with a scalding ache that even ice cream sodas couldn't seem to cure.

Would Romeo of winked at waitresses? Can you frame Juliet having to peruse columns on "How to Keep a Man."

And in vaudeville, whenever Dave was satisfied *my* gaze was secure on the gink that balanced beautifully atop the ladder, *his* eyes would focus on the cutie that held it. I knew it as sure as though a dotted line had been drawed from him to her. And it hurt. But unless you are a woman, you can never know how it hurts.

However, I didn't say nothing.

Dave loved me. I knew that. But I knew, too, though it come over me as gradual as springtime in Alaska, that it wasn't no Love of the Ages—just the plain, common, everyday kind that settles you down into a plain, common, everyday wedded life.

And one day the insidious idea inserted itself into my think tank—*maybe there ain't no other kind!*

I went and asked my married chum, Mamie O'Moody.

Mame was in her kitchen, boiling clothes that had a queer, damp smell, while Thomas O'Moody, Jr., tried to chase steam mists with a porridge spoon.

As I come in she dabbed hopelessly at a mess of hair that browsed all over her head like seaweed, attempted to erase an egg stain from Tom Junior's manly bosom, and in other ways created the air of a happy and efficient young matron.

I perched myself gingerly on the kitchen stool and allowed the hopeful to explore my new permanent wave. Then:

"Mame," I burst out abrupt, "is there such a thing as love?"

She looked at me, startled, stopped in her stirring of the wet clothes, then resumed, smiling quiet.

"Why, I guess so," she answered calm.

"But did *you* locate it, Mame—the Love of the Ages you used to dream about in them long days down to the store?"

Her face was turned a little away from me, but I noticed her lips tremble like the wings of a wounded sparrow.

"Maybe not—*that*," she admitted contemplative.

My voice was so tense it made her look at me.

"Mame," I persisted, "was it like—Romeo and Juliet?"

She tossed back her head and tittered, with Tom Junior cooing merry in chorus.

"Romeo?" she chortled. "That's good! Say, the only balcony my poor, patient, tobacco-chewing angel husband knows anything about is the one down to the local vaudeville house. And as for swearing by the moon, he's sworn by everything but."

"Doesn't he love you, Mame?"

Her eyes was sober.

"He's good to me."

"Mame, I—I know this sounds silly, but does *he* wink at—waitresses?"

"No more than other human men."

"Don't it make you feel bad?"

"At first, but I got used to it. I don't mind now. The thing that used to pain in my throat took an anæsthetic, slept and died."

"It oughtn't to die!" I declared vehement. "The thing in there that hurts, Mame, is good for you and shouldn't die. Something's wrong when it's killed."

"That's life, Tess."

"Life! But you didn't map it out that way when you married Tom, did you?" I cried passionate. "You just painted him and you always—like a perfect picture, didn't you?"

Mame nodded.

"And when he does them little things, it's just like dabbing dirt on that picture,

ain't it, so that after a while you can't see the original canvas at all? Well, I want to keep mine fresh and clear and shining. Mame—like Romeo and Juliet."

I was crying—terrible, hot tears that scalded my cheeks.

Mame wiped her soapy hand and laid it on my bent back, comforting.

"Tess," she said, sad and final, "you're looking for what ain't."

I didn't say no more, only thanked her and executed my exit.

On my way home I bumped into Miss Mendel, with a book she'd reaped from the library.

I stared at her, curious, that funny fussy little old maid as dry as the tale she toted. And I loved her—and hated her—and tore up to my attic boodoir to entomb my dead heart in the cold white pillow.

And as I laid there, shaking like an oak uprooted by the storm, I thought of Mame, and more, of Mame's eyes. Little and narrow they was, when once they had been so wide and trusting.

Narrow eyes! Trying not to notice her Romeo wink at waitresses. Narrow eyes and married eyes! Well, I would keep mine like Miss Mendel's.

I rose from my pillow, resolute, then caved again.

Dave! Dave!

Oh, that loving shoulder that made such a warm nest for my weary head—that merry smile—that rumpled hair that seemed to kiss my fingers as I rumpled it! Oh, Dave!

I become quiet, like a shaken ship that finds a little lull between the tempests—my heart crying for Davie, no matter what—my soul crying for that picture of things as I planned them.

The supper bell dinged from the lower hall.

I rose instinctive. The call of the waffle was too strong, and habits are like porous plasters. So I marched, mechanic, out into the hall, though I couldn't of swallowed a wafer. For when the mind is et by doubt and fear the stomach seems to inaugurate a hunger strike outa sympathy.

But I went brave, to answer the call of the hash.

Passing Miss Mendel's door a timid tone trailed me, and a head poked itself out cautious.

"Miss Tessie! Miss Tessie!" she hailed in a potent whisper. "Could you come in a minute? I'm afraid a fuse has blown out or something, and I don't dare leave it like that."

I entered, attempting to appear competent.

"It's there," she explained. "Something's broke, I think."

"Yeh," echoed I from my weary heart. "Something's broke, all right."

"It's the connection," she analyzed. "It ain't joined the way it should be—"

"Like lots of people," I butt in bitter.

She eyed me keen.

"But I don't want you to bother about it," she said gentle, "when your young man's waiting to have supper with you."

"I ain't hungry— Is he downstairs?" I inquired, torn between longing and indifference.

"Mrs. Gilman called up to you half an hour ago, saying you had company. Didn't you hear?"

"No."

She eyed me again, keen.

"Dear me," she flurried, "I—I *hope* you ain't been—quarreling."

"It ain't that," I denied, as far from tears as the sink tap from the sink. "It ain't that, only—"

Of a sudden that little old lemon seemed almost human.

"Oh, Miss Mendel," I bust out, responding to her sympathy like a stray pup to a soup bone, "Oh, Miss Mendel, *is* there such a thing as love—real, real romance—like Romeo and Juliet?"

Miss Mendel tucked me close to her on the dumpy old sofa.

"There is," she answered, positive, her voice so firm and steady, her eyes as wide and blue as violets washed with new rain.

"You know it?" I asked, wondering.

The little book about love songs of an earlier day squatted comfy beside us underneath the lamp. She took it, gentle, in her skinny old hands and shook out the ratty brown rose that must of once been red.

"There is," she repeated like a recita-

tion. "It come to me—a long time ago when I was like you. So beautiful it was, so sweet."

Her eyes swum in their tears like goldfishes in a bowl.

"It was so complete and perfect," she breathed, "the kind that sort of makes you feel—there isn't nothing more to wish for."

"That's it!" I cried eager. "Nothing more. Oh, Miss Mendel, ain't it awful to be always feeling, no matter how nice things is, they ought to be better. That something is missing—like a carburetor in a Ford truck?"

Miss Mendel nodded.

"But nothing was missing," she said fervent, "in that one perfect year of our betrothal. And then—he was taken away."

"Not to Bloomingdale or Blackwells or anything?" I asked, horrified.

She smiled sad.

"He—died."

I was silent in her sorrow.

"And you never had nobody else all these years?" I marveled, after a period of proper waiting. "Wasn't you ever lonely?"

"This rose," she told me gentle, "wouldn't let me forget him."

I gulped.

"Well, I'm glad, Miss Mendel," I said, hushed, "that you've told me there was love like that in the world. So when you amble down to dinner, Miss Mendel, pass Dave the merry word I ain't hungry. Tell him to go ahead—without me."

Miss Mendel's shoulder heaved near for a haven, but I scorned it and stood erect, silent and calm.

Then I went back to my room.

I looked in the glass.

Down inside me, something pained terrible, but it was only the death throes of the thing that had hurt so and wouldn't never hurt no more. So I looked in the glass at them wide, calm eyes o' mine, them eyes that would never be narrow.

Then I opened my bureau drawer to dig out a clean hanky. In the corner laid a heap of crumpled rose leaves—the rose that my erstwhile Romeo had brung me while I trembled expectant on my balcony—that day in May.

Why did its being a day in May make me feel so bad? If it had been November I would of only laughed and let the skies do the weeping.

"Ni-ice r-red ro-ses! Buy da ni-ice r-red rose for da sweetheart!"

Shut up! I don't want no rose—only a forget-me-quick.

Yep, I would wait—wait for the real Romeo that would bring me the love of the ages.

The pain in my chest swelled up into my throat like the coming of the Bronx express. But I would wait. Let it go by my station. It wasn't the train I wanted. I didn't want nothing on this earth. Only to be alone. Only to stand forever, first on one foot, then on the other, in the basement of Saltz's store. That's all I wanted. Only—

Of a sudden I swept that little dry heap of rose dust into my hand and cured the awful aching of my lips.

Yep, Miss Mendel, you're right—you're right—you're right!

"The rose wouldn't let me forget him."

Blithesome I powdered my nose, fluffed my bob, and trotted downstairs to meet Dave at the dining room door.

"Oh, Dave!" I whispered soft, but I knew he could hear me, even above the concert of Mom Gilman's soup course. "Oh, Dave, let's eat—I've been so terrible hungry!"

V.

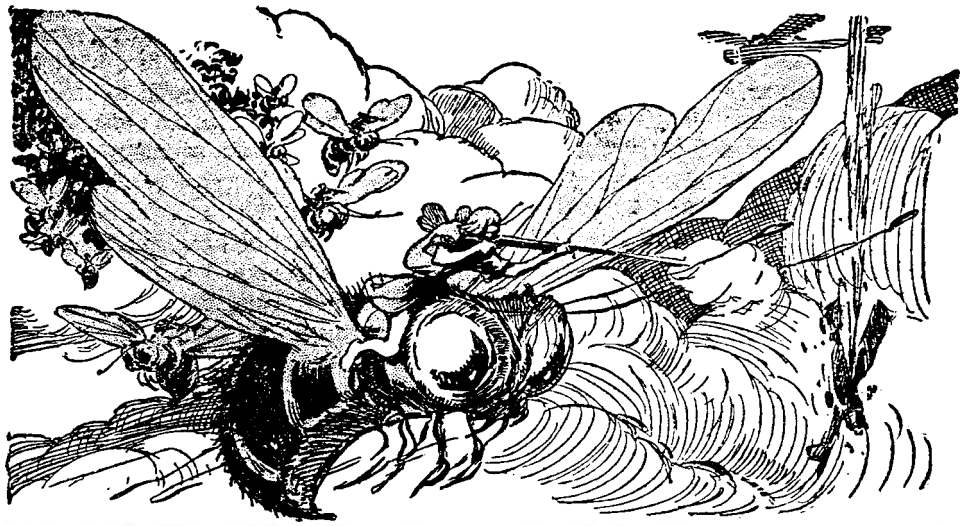
It's a year. Dave may not be no Romeo, but he's my husband. And I'm informing you right now I'd rather be Mrs. David K. O'Donnel in a Brooklyn flat with Mr. David K. O'Donnel, than cold Juliet in a marble mausoleum with her Romeo.

As for them narrow eyes, I got 'em, too. But whether it's from watching Dave wink at waitresses or seeing that Dave Junior don't mistake the safety razor for a teething ring, I ain't been yet able to ascertain.

And if sometimes I sigh a little, like all women, for the grand lover that might of been, I reason—well, a bird in the home is worth two in the imagination.

Ain't it?

THE END



The Radio Beasts

By RALPH MILNE FARLEY

Author of "The Radio Man."

WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN PARTS I and II

MYLES STANDISH CABOT, radio genius who has solved the secret of the wireless transmission of matter, returns to earth from Poros—the planet Venus—whose inhabitants, the Cupians, are much like men, except that they have antennæ, instead of ears, and communicate by radio. He relates how the conquered Formians, giant, intelligent ant-men, conspiring with Prince Yuri, a renegade Cupian, and his followers, kill King Kew XII of Cupia and overrun the country. Cabot rallies the Cupians to the support of his own little son, King Kew XIII, whose mother, Prince Lilla, is Kew XII's daughter. Cabot, separated from Hah Babbuh, Buh Tedn, Poblath, and other loyal friends, flees northward alone to Lake Luno, but discovers his castle deserted and baby Kew dead. Prince Toron, former comrade of Cabot, claims the throne. In attempting to escape ant-men who have surrounded him Cabot is carried by an underground river into the caves of Kar, where he is befriended by priests of the lost religion of Cupia. He reaches Toron's camp and listens to the prince's tale of escape from the ant-men.

CHAPTER XIII.

TORON CONTINUES HIS STORY.

BUT still the young prince did not reply. Myles Cabot glanced around the little group and saw that they all were grinning broadly. They had heard the story before.

Cabot turned back to Toron again and urged, "Go on. You have just said that, as you dashed through the row of ghostly figures, some one lassoed you around the neck. What happened then?"

"What happened then?" replied the prince tantalizingly. "The next thing that I knew the red light of morning was flooding the eastern sky. I was lying naked on the ground in a garden, while just above me stretched a clothesline with a row of Cupian togas fluttering in the breeze. These were the ghostly row of sentinels of the night before, and the rope which had cut

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for March 21.

off my wind so summarily had not been a lasso at all, but merely the clothesline itself."

Myles looked very uncomfortable and sheepish, as a general laugh went up at his expense. Then said he: "Toron, you are a first class story-teller, and you certainly had me fooled. Did it really happen?"

"Honestly," replied the boy.

And Poblath added: "It couldn't have been better if he had made it up."

Then Toron went on with the narrative of his adventures: "The clothesline was a Builder-send in my then naked condition. Hastily grabbing one of the togas from off the rope, I donned it and hurried out of the garden, just as the morning life began to stir in the little village. Before folks had fully awakened for the day's round of pleasures and work, I had gained the fields and the woods beyond and there I slept throughout the day.

"Just before nightfall, I found some red clay with which to dye my telltale yellow locks, and then set out once more to grope my weary way northward through the jet black night. Thus I kept on for several days of sleep and nights of travel, until one night a kerkool rounded a turn too quickly for me and deluged me with its light before I had time to scuttle into the woods. Scuttle I did, however, and soon several flash lamps appeared among the trees in pursuit.

"The lights of my enemies showed me their whereabouts and thus enabled me to dodge them. But on the other hand, I could not see to find my way, whereas they could; with the result that finally they surrounded me. There were four of them, four Formians. I was unarmed. 'Foolhardiness is not courage,' as Poblath would say. So I surrendered. Luckily they did not recognize me."

"Why should they," remarked Cabot, "without your yellow curls and your royal robes?"

"Anyhow," continued the prince, "they didn't. I asked them what was the idea of arresting a poor farmer in the middle of the night, and they replied that it was this middle-of-the-night part of it that made my actions suspicious. Where was I going, and what was I doing? I cooked up some sort of a yarn about being out of a job and out of tickets and they appeared to believe me. However, they said that the orders of Queen Formis were to make a census of all male Cupians, for the purpose of either impressing them into service or killing them, as soon as the army of King Yuri should come along on its triumphal march northward.

"Of course, I did not want to be listed and quartered on any of these villages, where my identity would probably be recognized, so with mock eagerness I asserted my loyalty to my brother—naturally not referring to him as such—and inquired as to whether there were any openings for mechanics in the air service, thanking my luck the while, that we Cupians do not have registration numbers painted on our backs like the Formians.

"As a result of my apparent eagerness to serve in the army, which seemed perfectly plausible in view of my being out of a job, only a few perfunctory questions were asked as to my identity, and I was taken along to an encampment of the ants. I had picked the air service, because that would undoubtedly be manned almost entirely by Formians, who would not be so likely to recognize me as would my own countrymen, unless I happened to run across some of my former instructors at the University of Mooni. I had to take a chance on that.

"To make a long story short, the motley army of the yellow and black allies came along a few days later bound northward, and I was assigned to one of the kerkools which carried repair parts and machine tools for the airplanes. We then proceeded north without event until the entire army went into action south of Lake Luno. And, just in time for this battle, there arrived a large force of fliers gathered from all over the two kingdoms for the final drive that was to end the war.

"According to word brought back to the air base where I was stationed, the army of my baby cousin had only one plane and one anti-aircraft gun, but these accounted for quite a number of ant fliers and soon we were busily at work making repairs."

"Just a moment," interrupted Myles Cabot. "Didn't it give you a queer feeling to be repairing the airships that were to fly against your own people?"

"Not at all," replied Prince Toron with a smile, "for most of my efforts were directed toward filing stay wires almost to the breaking point, drilling small holes in fuel tanks and plugging them with loose wooden pegs, adding grit to the lubricating oil and performing other similar acts of sabotage. I really believe that I brought down fully as many Formian planes as did the opposing army.

"But in spite of my loyal efforts and those of the brave Cupians fighting under Hah and Tedn and Poblath, the black hordes were too numerous and too well equipped and so finally triumphed. Word came back to us that the Kew forces had been driven beyond Lake Luno and that Luno Castle was under siege. Airplanes no longer returned for repairs, and most of our mechanics—ants they were—drifted forward to get a view of the fighting, leaving me all alone.

"Now was my chance to act. There was standing near by one ship which had been brought in for some minor adjustments, and on which I had secretly grounded the ignition, thus putting the machine out of commission. It was a simple matter to open the short-circuit, and soon I was humming up into the air.

"Straight up I rose until I could get a pterodactyl's eye view of the lake and the surrounding hills. Several stads to the north was the slowly retreating line of Hah Babbuh and Buh Tedn, followed by an opposing line of the forces of Yuri, while other ant troops surmounted the heights overlooking the little lake. Over the contending armies flew the navies of Formis, dropping bombs, but their marksmanship was not proving very destructive, for they were flying high to avoid the eddies which rose from the gorges of the mountainous country to the northward.

"Even as I gazed, a party of fliers detached themselves from the advance and returned toward Luno Castle, so I settled slowly down to join them. Of course, they suspected nothing, until I got within a few parastads of them and started dropping bombs. Two planes fell, and you should have seen the rest scatter!

"But just as I was exulting over my momentary victory, my attention was attracted to the island of the castle. Fighting was in progress on the heights and on the beaches. Cupians were leaping from the cliffs into the water and swimming toward the northern shore of the lake. Many Formians were rowing across from the mainland to the southern shore of the island, where they disembarked and got into the fray, and very soon after that one of my countrymen had been driven into the water.

"They all seemed to be good swimmers, but on the northern mainland cliffs awaited an eager throng of armed ant-men. Without a moment's hesitation I turned the nose of my plane straight down and dropped almost to the level of the lake; then, quickly righting her, I skimmed along the cliffs and cleared them of the black enemy almost instantly with a few well-placed bombs, just in time for the brave survivors of the castle to land and make their way through the hostile cordon."

"Yes," confirmed Poblath, "if it hadn't been for Toron, we never should have succeeded in rejoining the army. We got through the next lines in a storm which followed soon after."

The young prince continued his story: "But this maneuver placed me below the enemy fliers whom I had just dispersed. Back they came and swooped down on me as I rose to meet them. My plan was to fly straight up through them, for the reason that a target coming head on at a slight angle is the hardest to hit from an airship. But they got me with a bomb before I could make it; and my plane fluttered down like a falling leaf, completely out of control into the water.

"It took me some paraparths to disentangle myself from the floating wreckage; and by the time that I had done so, the storm, of which Poblath speaks, had broken. It was not much of a storm as Porovian storms go, but in the semi-darkness and rough waves I managed to swim undetected to the island, where I concealed myself in

one of the shore caves until nightfall, when I ascended to the castle.

"There I found matters much as I imagine you found them, Myles, a day or two later, except that the darling baby king, whom I had never seen alive, was lying dead, kicked unceremoniously into a corner, with the jeweled dagger of my brother stuck through its tiny chest. So I prepared the funeral bier as you found it, and left that note to let you know that Cupia still had a king. That is all."

"But how did you get through the enemy lines so that you might join our army?" asked Cabot.

"That would take too long to tell," replied Toron, "for we are anxious to hear your adventures. I had a most difficult time hiding in the hills and escaping from one danger only to fall into another. But luck was with me and I finally got through after several sangths of wandering. Now tell us *your* story."

So Cabot told of how he had been left for dead at the blockade on the outskirts of Kuana the evening of the assassination, how he had journeyed north with insufficient arms and no headset, how he had been captured and then had escaped in the relay station, how he had fallen into the trap of the ant-bear, how he had seized the kerkool and reached Lake Luno, how he had been burned out of the woods and washed away by the lost river, how he had fought the beasts of the dark in the Caves of Kar until the blue ape had rescued him, how the priests had nursed him back to health and finally how he had made his way through the forces of Yuri to safety and freedom.

When the comparing of notes had ceased, the newcomer outlined what he had learned of the plans of the army of Yuri.

"Would that we could gain control of the air!" sighed Prince Toron, "but, alas, we have not one single plane. Every day the enemy scouts fly over us, mapping our positions. In fact, the only thing which holds them at all in check is the large number of whistling bees which infest this region, and an occasional shot from our two anti-aircraft guns."

By this time the pink twilight had fallen over the face of the planet and Cabot, tired but somewhat relieved, withdrew to the quarters prepared for him and tumbled into the rough cot which he found there.

The next thing he knew, it was morning. He was awakened by an orderly appearing at his tent, to inform him that the commanding general desired his presence for a trip of inspection along the front. So with some difficulty, he shaved, made himself presentable, and reported at headquarters, where Hah was awaiting him with a few of his more immediate personal staff. A rough soldiers' meal of green milk and alta was served, and then the party started on their reconnaissance.

During the meal, and as they walked along, Hah sketched to his old friend and associate the events which had occurred since Myles and Buh Tedn with their loyal troops had left the mangool at Kuana on the evening of the assassination, to begin their long march northward. Hah had been instructed to hold the jail at all costs, as a rallying place for whatever loyalists might remain at the capital. Throughout the rest of that afternoon and all through the following night, the forces in the mangool gradually augmented. By morning the jail was jammed with supporters of the baby king. They even overflowed into all the surrounding blocks.

But with the daylight came the inevitable, namely, a few effective bombs from Formian fliers, which forced Hah Babbuh and his men out into the open. Just as he and his immediate advisers were wondering what course to take, a messenger arrived from Kamel Barsarkar of Ktuth, stating that he was in control of the city and pledging his allegiance to little Kew. Instantly Hah decided to take the road which runs southeastward from Kuana until it skirts the old pale which used to mark the boundary between Cupia and Formia. This road then curves northward again until it reaches the city of Ktuth.

So thither Hah set out, and met with practically no resistance, as Yuri and his ants were all engaged to the northward and were naturally expecting that Hah would make for Lake Luno. But the ant-men soon discovered the plans of the loyal Cupians, and

therefore attacked Ktuth in force shortly after the newcomers reached there.

In Cupia there are but two principal roads running from the cities which border the old pale to the northern part of the Okarze Mountains, at the foothills of which lies Lake Luno. One of these roads starts at Kuana, and is the one over which Poblath and his jail kerkools, Buh Tedn and his foot troops, Prince Toron, the army of Yuri and lastly, Myles Cabot himself, made their way. This is the direct road. The other runs north from Ktuth and enters the Okarze range at a point northeast of Luno. And it was over this second road that Kamel and Hah retreated.

It was well that they did, for they gathered additional supporters from every town through which they passed, and they kept the enemy from making a hurried advance along this road, and thus perhaps reaching the mountains, and possibly even Luno Castle, ahead of the main Cupian army.

As it was, Hah and Kamel held the road, beat a masterly retreat and joined the main army as it was entrenching itself just after the battle of Lake Luno.

So much for Hah's account, which I have greatly boiled down, as its details would have but little bearing on the main events which I am endeavoring to cover.

Now that Myles had heard this latest narrative, he was able to piece together a very complete history of the war to date, compiled from the events in Kuana before all the parties separated at the mangool, and from his own adventures, and the stories told by the priests of Kar, by Prince Toron and by Hah Babbuh.

During the reconnaissance which now was in progress, Cabot's attention was chiefly devoted to recalling to memory and checking up these various accounts.

Save for the cheers of the loyal troops, the trip along the front was uneventful until there was heard in the southern skies the familiar purr of a nearing motor. An enemy plane on scout duty. Instantly Hah and Myles and their party got quickly under cover.

On came the plane, but presently another sound was borne to the antennæ of the watchers, namely, a shrill whistling from the woods on their right.

"Now we'll see some fun," softly radiated Hah, "for here comes a whistling bee to do battle with the plane controlled by the ant-men."

And sure enough, even as he spoke, a huge orange and black insect winged its way into the silver sky. The fight took place almost directly overhead, and was a repetition of the two battles in which Cabot himself had taken part near Saltona, while still a guest of the ant-men at Wautoosa during the early part of his stay on the planet.

Both parties appeared to be adepts in the art of aerial warfare, but, of course, the bee had only his sting and legs with which to defend himself, whereas the plane had its fighting tail, its grapple hooks and at least one rifle. Given a fair deal, with only side-slips, spirals, loop-the-loops and tail-jabs, and the bee would have had the advantage; but what chance had he against explosive bullets? And so in due course of time the bee was shot down, and fell screaming to the ground; while the plane, evidently injured to some extent itself, retired again to the southward.

The bee fell quite close to where the observers were stationed; and, impelled by curiosity to see how badly it was damaged —for every whistling bee remaining alive meant just one more obstacle to the air fleet of the enemy—Hah and Cabot and their suite drew near to the disabled creature, keeping their revolvers ready, however, lest it should attack them.

Cabot's radio headset had been working badly that morning, and now apparently it began playing tricks upon him, for as he walked along he thought he heard a very faint voice calling: "Cabot, Cabot, O Myles Cabot!"

But as his radio sense was nondirectional, he could not tell whence seemed to come the voice. He stopped and began to adjust the controls. Clearer and yet more clear sounded the voice until, at the shortest wave length of which his set was capable, entirely outside the range of Cupian conversation, the sound became no longer a vague suggestion, but rather an unmis-

takable voice, speaking the universal language of Poros:

"Cabot, Cabot, O Myles Cabot!"

CHAPTER XIV.

PORTHERIS.

"CABOT," said the voice, "do you not know me? Do you not recognize him whom you rescued from the spider web and who afterward spared your life near Saltona, although you had robbed his honey store? It is I, Portheris, who speak to you. Put down your gun and give me help, or I perish."

There could be no longer any doubt as to the source of that mysterious voice; for it was the whistling bee who was speaking. Cabot sheathed his weapon and, switching his controls back to the normal range of Cupian speech, he instructed Hah Babbuh to put up his weapon likewise. Hah, who, of course, had heard nothing, was much mystified, but nevertheless obeyed his superior.

Switching to the bee's wave length again, Cabot said: "Portheris, once you spared me. 'A life for a life.' I am yours to command. How badly are you hurt?"

"I cannot exactly tell. But I think and hope that it is nothing more than a broken wing-joint."

At Cupian wave length Cabot then asked: "Is there with our army any one versed in insect ailments?"

"There is," replied Hah, "for my aide, Emsul, studied such under the ant-men at Mooni. But surely you do not contemplate helping this bee, for it is well known that the whistling bees, although unwittingly they are assisting us in this war, yet nevertheless do not themselves distinguish between Cupians and Formians as enemies."

"*This* bee is a friend of mine," asserted the earth-man, "and will not hurt Emsul, if I tell him not to. Quick, send for Emsul, for if he can save the life of this whistler, I believe that we are on the eve of an important accession to our forces."

But Hah was still unconvinced.

"How can you 'tell' him?" he asked, "for whistling bees cannot talk."

"I can whistle, though," laconically replied his superior.

So a private was sent on the double quick for Emsul.

The veterinarian, when he arrived a few paraparths later, approached the wounded insect most gingerly; but finally his professional curiosity got the better of him, and he plunged into his work. It was the first time that any physician, either Cupian or Formian, had ever examined a live bee, and accordingly it was a great day for science!

Emsul's inspection convinced him that all that was amiss was a broken wing and shock, and that with care Portheris would entirely recover, so a huge litter was improvised. Then came the question of getting the enormous creature onto this litter. He was too weak to be of very much assistance; but, by dint of great effort, and much prying by means of poles, and some kicking by the bee's own legs, they finally got him on. Then six men grasped each end of each handle, and bore the striped creature in triumph to headquarters, where he excited the wonder of the entire staff, and not a little fear.

To appreciate the situation fully, we must use an earthly analogy. Imagine a party of British officers hunting in the jungles of India in the company of a near-human creature from another planet—say Mars, for instance—and coming upon a wounded man-eating tiger. Imagine the man from the skies talking in apparent silence with the tiger, and then informing the astonished hunters that the tiger is a friend of his, and must be brought into camp and treated for his wounds. How could they know that the ferocious beast would not turn and devour them, when cured, or even during the process? Only a supreme confidence in the man from the other planet would induce them to go through with the program.

But the Cupians had just such a trust in Myles Cabot, and so they dared to risk befriending the bee. Emsul set the wing-joint in a splint, and several green cows were driven in for the bee's delectation. These satisfied his appetite, and he slept.

When Portheris had rested, Cabot, call-

ing in Toron, Hah Babbuh, Poblath and Buh Tedn, and—alternately tuning to the two ranges of speech—broached to them his plan.

"Portheris," said he, "how is it that you know our language although your range is so different from ours?"

"That question has oft been discussed among us," replied the bee, "and we have always regarded the other inhabitants of Poros as either stupid or rude. Do you remember calling out to me after the fight at Saltona, 'Don't! Was it for this that I saved you from the spider?' I heard you, and stayed my sting. Yet, when I answered you, you gave no heed. It has always been thus. Cupians and Formians alike have never replied when spoken to by Hymernians, or bees as you call us. Why is it, I ask you in turn?"

"Stop this whistling," interjected Poblath, "and tell us what it is all about."

But Cabot, being tuned to another wave length, did not hear him. The bee, however, heard and informed Cabot, who obligingly shifted his controls and explained.

"As I figure it out," said he, "these bees can send and receive on either of two different wave lengths. One of these is about the same as that of Cupian speech, and on this the bees merely whistle, so that whistling is the only sound which you ever hear them utter. On the other wave length they talk, but as this is outside the range of your antennæ, you never hear it. But they can hear you talk, when they are tuned to receive the whistles of their own breed. And I can both hear them and send to them, by tuning my artificial speech-organs to their higher wave length."

"It sounds plausible," assented Toron judicially.

The others were astounded.

Then tuning back to the shorter wave length the earth-man continued his conversation with the bee.

"If you Hymernians have the intelligence to understand and to talk our language, how is it that you have no more sense than to attack the ant-men, whose rifles render them invincible against you?"

"I know not," Portheris replied, "save that we cannot resist a fight. I suppose it is for the same reason as leads smaller insects to seek a light, only to be destroyed."

"Then if you must fight," suggested Cabot, "why do you not fight in swarms, and thus overwhelm your adversaries by sheer weight of numbers?"

"It never occurred to any of us," answered the bee, simply. "We are an independent race, who fight for the love of fighting, rather than any desire for victory."

"Would you consider a project whereby you could achieve more, and more effective, battles?" asked Myles.

"Probably."

"What do you think, then, of this plan? I will equip each Hymernian with a fighting man armed with a rifle, to ride upon his back. If you will assemble your brethren together, I will train them in the tactics of aerial battle formation. Of course, all your fighting will have to be done right-side-up, lest you dislodge your riders. No side-slips, no spirals, no loop-the-loops. But this disadvantage will be offset by the weight of overwhelming numbers. By the way, speaking of numbers, how many Hymernians could you muster?"

The bee made a mental calculation.

"About three thousand," said he.

"Fine!" ejaculated the earth-man. "The Formians at present cannot have more than one thousand ships. Thus, with the training which we can give you, and with the equipment which we can supply to you, you can go forth and conquer your hereditary enemies, the ant-men. And when you have returned victorious, you shall live at peace with the Cupians, who will breed for you special herds of the choicest auks to satisfy your need for food. What do you say, O Hymernian?"

"It is a wonderful plan!" murmured Portheris devoutly. "May the Great Architect speed the mending of my wing."

The plan and its approval were then conveyed to the assembled Cupians, who went wild with enthusiasm at the prospect of once more regaining control of the air.

"It spells sure victory," said Hah Babbuh soberly.

"Yes," assented Poblath the philosopher, "the Great Architect builds to peculiar plans, but the resulting edifice is perfect."

"Let's go," said Toron, who was beginning to pick up army slang from the earthman.

And so, a few sangths later, when Portheris had entirely recovered, he flew away, to return in several days with a vast concourse of his winged brethren.

It was indeed an imposing spectacle. Three thousand orange-and-black bees, each the size of a horse, winging their way through the air in such swarms that they obscured the silver skies and darkened the ground beneath. And the noise! Cabot alone could hear the combined hum of twelve thousand wings, but the Cupians were nearly deafened by the whistling.

But finally all the bees settled down and found resting places on the surrounding rocks. Portheris reported that all had agreed to follow him in this new undertaking, and their battle lust was hard to restrain.

There, in the presence of a large part of the Cupian army and of his own followers, Portheris the First was crowned King of the Bees, and he and Toron concluded the treaty of alliance between Cupia and the bee-people. Cupia at last had an air navy!

But Cupia by no means yet had control of the air. First it would be necessary to discipline and train that wild and lawless winged horde. And some task it was! Cabot had to take personal charge of the instruction, for although others could talk *to* the Hymerians, he was the only person on all Poros who could hear and understand their replies.

And it was with great difficulty that he kept back the half-trained bees from spoiling the whole show by picking a fight with every Formian airplane which appeared.

At last, however, the animate air fleet were completely subjugated and trained. All that the Cupian leaders awaited was the auspicious moment at which to strike.

CHAPTER XV.

FOR CONTROL OF THE AIR.

TORON, King of Cupia; Portheris, King of the Bees, and Myles Cabot, the earthman, conferred together on the situation.

Said Toron: "The latest advices from Kuana are that Yuri has convinced the Princess Lilla of your death, O Cabot, and that she has consented to wed him, in order that her poor country may again be at peace."

"Is that exactly loyal to you, the rightful king?" asked Portheris, but Cabot refused to put the question, for fear of hurting Toron's feelings; so, he explained to the bee that Lilla's high patriotism transcended any mere personal loyalty.

"How do you come by this information?" he then asked Toron. "And how do you know it to be authentic? For, if true, it demands immediate action. But otherwise I am loath to strike until the time is right. Most of the wireless relay-stations have been destroyed. Is some supporter of ours at the capital possessed of a sufficiently powerful set to send from Kuana to here? And, if so, how do you prevent the interception of messages?"

Toron's reply astounded him: "Yuri's forces naturally expect radio from the army of Myles Cabot, the radio man; and so I have dropped wireless for the present and have turned to optics. I have been eager to tell you about this for some time, but have not yet had the opportunity.

"My apparatus consists of a telescope on a tripod. At the focus of the telescope is a small electric-light bulb. Thus, when two of these telescopes are focused on each other, at a distance say of eleven or twelve stads, the flashing of one bulb can be distinctly seen in the other telescope, and cannot possibly be intercepted except on a path less than a third of a parastad—about twelve feet—wide, even if the enemy should learn of the existence of our device, which there is no evidence that they have done. But, to make assurance doubly sure, both instruments are masked with screens which admit only the black light about which you taught me. Do you remember?

"We have spies in Kuana," he went on, "equipped with these instruments, and we have relay stations at intervals all the way from here to there. We use the dot-dash code, of course."

"Toron," exclaimed Myles Cabot, "you are a genius! That is exactly the scheme

of communication so successfully used by the A. E. F. in France."

Toron's face fell.

"Then I am not the inventor?" he said sadly.

"Cheer up," replied Cabot. "What does it matter that some one anticipated you on my planet, Minos? There is no one on Poros who will ever question your priority. And besides, your invention has probably saved the day. Send word to Kuana that Myles Cabot has returned to life and is about to march to do battle with his foes. I guess that that will not give too much information as to our plans. 'March' is good, for they will never suspect that it means 'fly.' Eh, Portheris?"

The bee wiggled his antennæ in appreciation.

Hah Babbuh, Buh Tedn and Poblath were then called in, and the plans were laid for the attack.

The next morning, as the invisible sun rose over Poros, there rose also the serried ranks of the orange and black air navy of the bees, led by Myles Cabot, mounted on the back of Portheris, the striped King of the Hymernians. Each bee carried a Cupian sharpshooter, armed with a rifle and a basket of bombs. The whole formation flew over the hills and ravines which housed the gathering armies of Cupia, then out across the broad valley which divided the two contending forces.

The Formians, and the few renegade Cupians who fought with them under the banners of Yuri, were, of course, prepared for an attack, by reason of Cabot's message which had been flashed to the capital, but they were totally unprepared for such an attack as this. The ant sentinels, eagerly scanning the opposing row of hills for the first appearance of the foot troops of Cabot, were picked off by fire from the air almost before they could give warning. Then the animated planes swept on and began bombing the hastily assembling Formians.

It was like the first gas attack of the Germans, or the first advance of the British tanks in the World War, but with this difference: the victors in the present instance fully realized their advantage and intended to press it home.

Close in the wake of the bees, came the foot troops of Cupia, surging across the plain and easily mopping up the demoralized Formians.

Soon, however, appeared the battle planes of the ants; but they were surprised and bewildered at the new aerial tactics of their enemies. They had fought against bees before; but never before against bees manned with sharpshooters. And so, although the advance of the striped fleet was stayed and many bees were shot down, yet an equal number of planes fell victims of the encounter.

By night the Cupians had consolidated their position to the south of Lake Luno, and Cabot had established his headquarters in the ruins of Luno Castle.

That evening, at a conference with his generals, it was decided that it would not do for the advance to continue too precipitately. In the first place, the air force ought not to be permitted to get too far ahead of the infantry. And in the second place, the casualties among the bees had been altogether too high. Planes could be rebuilt by the Formians, but bees could not be bred to order for Cupia. That was something which Cabot had not figured on.

So, now that the first shock attack was over, the advance progressed more slowly in the days that followed, strategy taking the place of brute force. Captured airplanes were repaired and manned by ex-flyers of the old Cupian air navy, and were used whenever possible in place of the bees, but still the mortality of these winged allies continued, until it became evident that, unless something were speedily done, the ant-men would soon regain control of the air. But what was to be done?

One day an aviator from a distant point on the front landed at headquarters with a message. As he stood talking to Myles Cabot, he suddenly remarked: "Why, I left my engine running. How careless of me!"

And he looked intently at his plane for a moment, whereat the motor ceased its purring.

"How did that happen?" asked Cabot. "Was that just coincidence? Or does your engine stop whenever you want it to?"

"I merely spoke to it, and it obeyed

me," answered the Cupian, simply, yet with suppressed pride. "There are several of us in the air service who have learned that trick."

"What do you mean?" ejaculated Cabot. "How can mere words stop an alcohol motor?"

"Oh, it isn't *words* that do it," explained the airman, "but rather a sort of radiation akin to speech. The right kind of an emanation from our antennæ will effectively interfere with the ignition at a distance of as much as one parastad."

"And can the same principle be invoked against a kerkool?"

"Of course not," laughed the aviator, "for kerkools employ trophil engines, which ignite by compression, rather than by electricity."

"So they do," said Cabot, "that is what we call a 'Diesel' engine on Minos."

And then there was born in the mind of the radio man, the germ of a great idea. He hurriedly sent for Toron, ablest electrician of the whole planet, and for Oya Buh, who had been professor of electricity at the University of Kuana before the civil war.

First, he had the flyer demonstrate to them his ability to stop his machine by rays from his antennæ. Then he outlined his plan as follows: "If the weak emanations from the speech organs of a Cupian can stop ignition at a distance of twelve paces, cannot we build a directional radio apparatus which will bring down enemy planes at a distance of a stad or more?"

"That ought to be possible," assented Oya gravely, "but the apparatus would probably be too heavy to mount on a plane, or on a bee," he added, laughing.

"Mount it on a kerkool, then," replied Cabot. "It would be infinitely more effective than an anti-aircraft gun, and the planes which we shoot down by this means will be unharmed for our own immediate use."

"But what is to prevent Yuri from learning of our contrivance and employing it against our planes?" interjected Toron. "For there be great electricians among the Formians."

"That is where the second part of my plan comes in," replied Cabot, with a twinkle in his eye. "We will equip all *our* planes with trophil engines. Let us send for Mitchfix, the trophil expert."

And so it came to pass that the energies all the mechanics of the Cupian army were turned to two tasks: namely, the trophilizing of the airplanes, and the construction of several kerkool-mounted radio machines for the propagation of the mysterious and fatal ray which was to stop the engines of the enemy. Meanwhile, of course, the advance stopped. The infantry dug in, and the activities of the bees were limited to the irreducible minimum necessary to keep off hostile scouting planes. Delay was irksome, but now Cabot, assured of eventual air control, could afford to wait.

One day, as he was scouting along the front on the back of Portheris, the whistling bee, they were suddenly boxed by three enemy planes which appeared unexpectedly from three different quarters. Such carelessness! Why had he, on whom so much depended, ventured so far from his own lines without an adequate escort? Well, there was nothing left to do now, but fight, so he unslung his rifle and entered into the fray.

Cabot was no mean shot. An animate airplane, to which he had merely to speak and which could converse with him in turn, was a decided advantage. But, even so, he was no match for three of the best flyers of the ant navy.

Nevertheless he brought down one enemy plane before the other two forced him to descend. His bee fell with him into a narrow gorge with precipitous sides. Although the bee was severely wounded, Cabot made the landing without mishap.

He had noticed during the fight that his enemies had apparently directed their shots at his mount rather than at him; and now, instead of dropping bombs, which would have been very effective in the confined space in which he found himself, they hovered down and attacked him on foot.

He still had his rifle, has bandolier of cartridges and several hand grenades. The large bowlders, with which the floor of the valley was strewn, afforded ample cover. The ant-men were advancing with only

their rifles, but also were taking advantage of the cover. Sniping between both sides continued without results.

Finally one of the ants held up two crossed sticks—the Porovian flag of truce—and Cabot stepped out into the open for a conference. Then, with a cry of glad surprise, he recognized the Formian. It was none other than the ant who had captured him on his first day on this planet, and rescued him from the carnivorous plant, had saved him from his enemy—the ant called "Satan"—had acted as his defense counsel in his trial before Queen Formis and had been his and Lilla's friend in Kuana.

"Doggo!" he exclaimed, "what are you doing here? I haven't seen you, or heard of you, since Peace Day, 358."

"Fighting for my own country, of course," laconically replied Doggo. "But to get down to business: 'A life for a life.' In your accursed 'War of Liberation,' you very kindly gave orders that I was to be spared. I now spare your life, for that and for old time's sake. But I must ask you to surrender unconditionally."

"What then?" queried Cabot.

"I shall then take you to Kuana as a prisoner," answered the ant. "I cannot promise that there your life will be spared, but I will use every bit of my influence, which is apt to be great, as I am now the winko of the entire air navy of Formia. You know me well enough to depend upon my word."

"Yes, Doggo, old friend, I do," said Cabot. He thought intently for a moment, then tuned his radio set to a shorter wave length and hastily addressed the bee: "Are you so badly hurt that you cannot reach headquarters?"

"I think not," was the reply.

"Then tell Hah Babbuh that I go to Kuana a prisoner—to rescue the Princess Lilla."

"But how can I tell him?" asked the bee, "seeing as you, alone of all the Cupians, can hear our speech, although all of us Hymernians can hear all of you."

That indeed presented a complication which had never before occurred to the radio man. The ability of the bees to receive on the wave length of the Cupians had been all that had been necessary for tactical purposes, and any communications *from* the bees had always been transmitted through Cabot. But at last he had an inspiration, which he explained as follows:

"Of course, I do not know how much you Hymernians understand about radio. Have you ever observed Cupians in battle formation?"

"Many times," replied the bee.

"Then undoubtedly you have noticed the little boxes which our officers wear strapped upon their heads between their antennæ."

The bee assented.

Cabot continued: "These are selective sending and receiving sets. Each one contains a wave trap, which silences the radiations of ordinary speech. You know how it is that you bees speak at a different wave length from the Cupians. Well, these boxes contain a wave length adjuster, which, by much the same principle, enables the officers to send to each other at different wave lengths, above the din of battle."

"I get the general idea," said Portheris.

"Go then to Toron," directed Myles. "Speak to him, and point with your paw to his selective set. Perhaps that will suggest to him to tune the instrument to your wave length, and perhaps your wave length is within the range of that instrument. At all events, it is our only chance."

At this point, noticing that Doggo was frantically agitating his antennæ, the radio man tuned back to Doggo's wave length just in time to hear him say: "Come, my friend, reply to my offer. Will you, or will you not, surrender?"

"I surrender," replied Cabot, "but on one condition, namely, that you spare the life of my faithful bee."

"Granted," said Doggo. "From henceforth you are my prisoner."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BEASTS OF KUANA.

AND so Portheris, the whistling bee, returned to headquarters with his message.

And so Cabot, the earth-man, returned southward in a few parths to the city from

which he had wearily journeyed but a short while ago. He had departed a fugitive; he returned a prisoner.

On the trip back in the ant aeroplane, he and Doggo conversed freely, out of antennæ shot of the pilot.

"I bear you no malice, my old friend," said the ant-man, "for I blame Prince Yuri for the unhappy condition of my country, more than I blame you. Had it not been for his treachery, our two nations would still be living at peace, as they were when you first set foot on this planet. Were it not for his recent machinations, what is left of Formia would still be living unmolested within the restricted borders to which the 'War of Liberation' reduced us. In such a position, we could win our way back by our mental superiority, our greater industry and our culture, instead of risking, in the scales of war, what little we have left.

"Prince Yuri cares not to reëstablish Formia. He is merely using us as means to his own ends, and will turn against us, his allies, when it suits his private purpose. You and I may yet live to fight side by side against the usurper. But, for the present, he is the official ally of Formia, and I am fighting for my country."

"As is just and right," added Cabot. "But, tell me how will Yuri and Formis relish your bringing me back alive, instead of dead?"

"I have thought of that," answered his captor. "Of course, there is danger that the populace may rally to your rescue. But I do not intend that the populace shall get a sight of you. If Yuri wishes you dead, he doubtless will enjoy killing you with his own hands. But I rather believe that he would prefer to have you alive for trading purposes. Do you not think that your princess would trade even her beautiful body in exchange for your safety?"

"No, I do not!" stoutly declared the earth-man, "you do not realize her intense loyalty to her country. For little Kew, she might have done so, as he was not only her baby, but also her king. But for me, never. Yuri misplayed, indeed, when he killed little Kew, for I am sure that Yuri would rather have Lilla even than the throne."

"Then why does he not swap the throne for Lilla?" asked Doggo devilishly.

"Just what do you mean?" asked Cabot.

Doggo explained: "You have cited the intense loyalty of the princess royal. Also you have expressed an opinion that Yuri would prefer Lilla to the throne. Why, then, would it not be natural for him to offer to abdicate in favor of your candidate, Toron, in return for Lilla's marrying him upon your sudden decease, which could be conveniently arranged? Such a settlement would bring permanent peace to this harassed continent, and every one would be happy—except, of course, Lilla and you. But you would be dead in the Elysian fields beyond the boiling seas, and she would be upheld by the consciousness of her noble martyrdom."

"My God!" exclaimed Myles, "she might accept *that*."

"Never fear, I shall not suggest it," replied the ant-man, "for I am still your friend to that extent, in spite of the warfare between our two countries."

Cabot heaved a sigh of relief.

"And what of Formis?" asked he.

"Oh," answered Doggo, "she is not the great Formis whom you knew. That Formis is dead. This queen is merely a newly-hatched one, who does pretty much as Yuri suggests."

The conversation then veered into personal reminiscences; the two former friends, now captor and captive, each recounting what had befallen him since their last meeting before the previous war.

As Cabot told of his age-long journey northward to rejoin his army, the ant remarked dryly, "Poblath will have to invent a proverb to the effect that 'You cannot kill a Minorian.'"

Cabot laughed and said, "He has already done so."

The tension was relieved for the first time since his capture.

Finally they reached Kuana, and hovered down onto the landing stage on the palace, the very palace where he and Lilla had lived together so happily as guests of the king, her father. That palace was now occupied by the usurper Yuri and the black hag Formis, and here was Lilla held a pri-

sooner by the murderer of her father and of her babe.

Cabot was now manacled for the first time, and then was led into the presence of the king and queen: Yuri, the man with the heart of a beast; and Formis, the ant with the brains of a man. Together they stood beneath a scarlet canopy, which set off to perfection the shiny black naked body of the ant queen, and the black toga which her ally was wearing in honor of their alliance.

"Well, this is indeed a pleasure," exclaimed King Yuri, rubbing his hands, as Myles Cabot entered the throne-room. "welcome to Kuana, you cursed spot of sunshine. Formis, permit me to present to you the arch-enemy of your people."

The black queen inclined her head slightly, but said nothing. Cabot, too, maintained a dignified silence. Only his eyes showed the intense hatred and scorn which he felt for the betrayer of his country and murderer of his son.

Yuri continued, "For to-night, you shall be my guest. To-morrow I shall decide how best you can be made to serve the welfare of my beloved people. By the way, would you like to see your wife?"

Cabot was caught off his guard.

"Yes!" he responded eagerly.

Yuri smiled.

"I think it can be arranged," he said. "Ho, sentinel, bring in the princess."

One of the ant soldiers withdrew, and presently returned with Princess Lilla, who entered the audience chamber inquiringly.

In spite of his studied composure, Myles started forward. Here was his beloved wife, from whom he had been absent scarcely a moment since their marriage, until the cruel civil war had separated them. How he longed to rush over to her side, and hold her in his love-starved arms; and whisper comforting words into her antennæ! But, with a great effort, he restrained himself. Yuri must not be permitted to see his emotion. So the earth-man stood still, as his loyal wife swept into the room.

She was no longer the little girl whom Myles Cabot had married. Bearing a child, and the subsequent sorrows and horrors which had crowded upon her, had made her a woman since he had left her on the fatal morning many sangths ago, to fly to the Peace Day exercises which had turned out so fatally. A beautiful woman she was yet. Her sorrows had not marred her fair face, and she still outshone all the other women of her race, or of any race for that matter. Cabot noted with a pang that she was dressed, not in royal blue as became one who was in mourning, but rather in black, presumably by order of Yuri, in honor of the visiting queen from ant-land.

Her eyes sought those of the king, then followed his glance until they rested on her husband. For a moment she stood aghast, then rushed across the room and flung her arms around his neck.

"Myles! Myles!" she cried. "Is it really you? They told me you were dead. Then came the news that you had rejoined your troops and were leading them again to victory. The people believed and were glad, but Yuri told me that it was all a lie, concocted to win the throne away from him, and that your body lay burned to a crisp in the woods north of Lake Luno. Yet still I would not marry him, even for the sake of my country, while there yet was a chance that you lived. But what brings you here? And why are you handcuffed?"

"Doggo brings me here," he replied with a smile, "and I am handcuffed lest I wring the neck of the reigning monarch."

"Which doubtless would give you great pleasure," interposed Yuri.

"Very great pleasure, your majesty," admitted Cabot with mock deference.

Yuri continued: "At last I have decided what steps to take for the welfare of my beloved country. The assembly will pass a law annulling your marriage on the ground that your husband is nothing but a lower animal. Then you shall have your choice of marriage to me as the price of Cabot's life, or of life with me as my slave and Cabot's death. Two sangths shall you have in which to decide. Meanwhile the woofuses shall guard your husband in the arena. I have spoken.

Then Cabot said: "Choose my death, O princess; for the armies of Cupia will avenge it, and Toron will become king."

"Not Toron!" exclaimed Lilla, then

caught herself, and to King Yuri she replied: "I have chosen, king. You may kill Myles Cabot, if you can, but I will never disgrace Cupia by marrying a beast. There may be some doubt about Cabot being a Cupian, but there is no doubt that you are a beast. 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.' Now *I* have spoken."

"That reminds me," said Yuri, not in the least perturbed, "that I must kill Poblath too, and add his lovely wife, Bthuh, to my retinue. Ho, hum, 'tis a weary job being a king. There are so many details to look after. Take them away; I am tired." And he turned and engaged in some inaudible conversation with the black queen.

Lilla flung her arms once more around the neck of her shackled husband. Then both were seized by the ant-soldiers, and were led out through different exits. During the interview, Doggo had withdrawn, doubtless because he felt that it might be difficult for him to restrain himself, when he saw the indignities to which he had subjected his old friend.

Myles wondered if King Yuri would deprive him of his electrical antennæ, for that had always been Yuri's move in the past. But no, for he was dragged away with his set still intact.

Then the guard wrapped Myles completely up in a blanket, and bundled him into a kerkool.

"A good sign," thought Myles. "It indicates that Yuri fears to show me to the populace. Well, here I am in Kuana, and a lot of good it does me! Anyhow, I have seen my Lilla, and she is well. Also I know how matters stand at court. The new ant-queen is a colorless creature."

And he smiled to himself at the pun. Somehow, he felt the same calm detachment which he had experienced during his trial for treason before the former Queen Formis. He could not help remembering, all the while, that, after all, this was only a nest of ants!

But he lost some of his calm when he found what was in store for him. The kerkool stopped in front of the Kuana stadium, and he was led into the arena. There his shackles were removed and he was given food and drink. Then five woofuses were led forth. Each woofus wore a leather collar buckled about its neck. To this collar were fastened a pole held by two ant-men, and a chain held by another, by means of which devices the clawing, scratching creature was kept under control.

Cabot was now placed in the center of a circle formed by five equally-spaced posts, each post being about two woofus-chain-lengths from the next. To each of these posts was fastened the chain of one woofus; and then the ant-men withdrew, leaving Cabot to his own devices.

The woofus is the most dreaded carnivore of all Poros. It is about the size and general appearance of an earthly mountain-lion, except that it is hairless, is lavender in color, has webbed feet, and has pale blue antennæ instead of ears. A woofus is a match for ten Cupians in fair fight, and its chief occupation, when not fighting, is just to sit and howl.

Most of the fauna of the planet are either reptiles or insects. Birds are unknown. Mathlabs, fireworms, blue apes and Cupians are about the only mammals. The insects run through all the sizes from tiny bugs up to the ant-men and the huge whistling bees. The reptiles range from the brink, which is a minute kangaroo like toad a quarter-inch in length, up to the woofus, which I have just described.

A pleasant situation for Cabot, indeed, to have five of these howling beasts staked about him in a circle.

Now he understood why he had been permitted to retain his apparatus. It was so that he might be tormented by the howling of these guards.

CHAPTER XVII.

"THE LION AND THE MOUSE."

THERE is an ancient fable about a brink which once did a favor for a woofus, thus so surprising the woofus that he died of the shock. But in the present case, the brinks figured a little bit differently, as you shall see as you read on.

To realize Cabot's predicament, take a pair of compasses and draw five equally spaced circles, each tangent to the next.

The center of each circle will then represent a post, and the circle will represent the area in which the woofus, tied to that post, can bite. The small star-shaped figure, bounded by the five circles, will represent the space in which Myles Cabot was to live during the next twenty-four days, while King Yuri was getting Cabot's marriage annulled by the Assembly, and was trying to persuade Lilla to reconsider her choice.

What irony of fate! The ground which Cabot now occupied was the identical spot where, a little over two years ago, he had directed the firing of the first shot for Cupian freedom. Here had been erected by him the stadium which was to have commemorated his victory over the Formians. And here he now languished in his own stadium, a prisoner of those same accursed Formians, whom he had thought he had driven from Cupia forever. What irony of fate!

The first night of his peculiar incarceration was uneventfully spent. Cabot switched off his headset, so as to shut out the screaming of the purple beasts, and slept the sleep of the just. The joke was on the king, if that august personage had thought to annoy his victim with the noise of the woofuses.

The next morning was unusually hot. Myles awoke, stretched himself, sat up and watched his purple jailers. The largest of them appeared to be ill. Its eyes were running, and its head was covered with swarms of brinks, those minute hopping-lizards which infest the concrete roads and other flat open spaces of Poros.

Instantly Cabot's interest turned to pity. This poor creature was, of course, a dreaded carnivore, a man-eater, and all that; but it was in dire trouble. Switching on his headset, he started talking to the woofus in a soothing crooning tone.

The huge beast pricked up its antennæ, then whined and rubbed its paw across its face, to wipe off some of the crawling brinks. The other purple saurians eyed Cabot hungrily and ferociously.

Cabot's bowl of water from the night before was still standing at his side. Tearing off one corner of his toga, he dipped it in the bowl, and shook a few drops onto the head of the sick woofus. The poor beast started with surprise, then settled down again and whined a bit more contentedly.

Creeping cautiously forward, Cabot wiped some of the brinks away with the cool, wet rag. The whining ceased, and the woofus flattened itself out with a sigh. It made no attempt to strike at its benefactor; and Cabot, emboldened, drew the bowl nearer and tenderly cleaned every filthy brink from the creature's face.

As the washing was concluded, the woofus opened its eyes and stared steadily at the man, yet still made no move to attack him; and Cabot with a sudden inspiration, began to scratch the edge of the woofus's jaw. The beast stretched its claws with pleasure and submitted to the caress.

Thus the prisoner seemed to have made a friend where one would be least expected. Yet, when the man moved as if to pass by his keeper, the latter growled menacingly and started to rise; whereat Cabot beat a hasty retreat to the center of his prison.

After a while the huge woofus settled down again. Then it whined softly. Once more Cabot bathed its sore eyes. They were friends again.

All this time Cabot kept a careful watch for his Formian jailers, and finally one of them arrived with breakfast, which was shoved in to him at the end of a long pole. Plain fare, but satisfying, alta and green milk.

Cabot asked for wash water, rags, and a clean toga. The wash water and rags were forthcoming, but the toga was refused. Then the Formian withdrew, and Cabot resumed the care of his patient.

Off and on throughout the day he bathed the poor creature's eyes and massaged its tired muscles.

Toward evening Yuri appeared, carrying a long whip, with which he proceeded to flick the five purple guardians into a state of frenzy.

"Stand up, or I'll flick you, too," he called out to the captive. "Haven't you sufficient manners to stand in the presence of your king?"

"Yes," answered Myles, "but, according to your own statement, I am only a

mere animal, by which token you are not *my* king, unless you lay claim to being king of the beasts."

In reply, Yuri gave a few vicious swipes at Cabot's pet woofus, which strained at its chain with rage. The earth-man went white.

"Are you doing that to frighten me, or just for the fun of it?" he asked in a tense voice.

"Not that it is any of your business," answered the king, "but, as a matter of fact, I am doing it merely because it gives me intense pleasure to demonstrate my power over these five fierce creatures, any one of which is a match for ten Cupians."

"Then stop it at once," thundered Cabot, rising to his feet, "or, by all that is holy, I'll risk my life to untie their chains."

Yuri saw that Myles meant it, and so desisted, but could not resist a parting shot: "So you did stand up for your king after all! I thought I could get you to."

And he strode away, laughing.

When Yuri had made his exit from the arena, Cabot walked over to his woofus, which, with foaming mouth and staring eyes, was still straining at its leash. Myles patted him on the back. It was the supreme test. The woofus ceased his straining and rubbed against the man's side. So they were still friends, and here was a friendship which would last.

Night came, and no guards entered the dimly lighted stadium. Cabot's huge pet slept with its head contentedly in his lap like a St. Bernard dog. As the earth-man stroked the sleek purple hide, he suddenly had an idea, and immediately put it into execution. He unstrapped and removed the collar from the neck of the beast.

"You are free, my friend," said he, "and if you take your freedom, it will leave me free too."

At his words, the woofus stirred, stood erect, shook itself, and then bounded off silently into the darkness. And the captive, now a captive no longer, followed through the gap which the woofus had left vacant. In a few strides, he reached the parapet which divided the tiers of seats from the sands, and was just about to leap up and grasp its edge, when a swift rushing form collided with him and sent him sprawling. Then great webbed paws were planted on his chest, and he saw the horrid head of a woofus leering down at him out of the half-darkness.

Nearer and nearer came the dripping jaws to his face, until—finally—the creature lapped his cheek. It was his own woofus, come back for him.

And thereupon he abruptly changed his plans.

All through that warm tropical night, Cabot, the earth-man, and this huge purple saurian of the planet Venus, ranged the Kuana stadium together, alone and in silence.

Myles started teaching the beast to heel, to lie down, and to attack, at his command. And, as the first touch of pink diffused the eastern sky, the two returned to the charmed circle together, the collar was snapped again in its proper place, and Cabot switched off his headset and lay down in the center for a sleep.

Night after night this performance was repeated, until the woofus was as letter-perfect as any dog ever trained. Then Myles started to teach the woofus to hate the other four, above which it towered now that it had regained its health. In fact he had never seen a larger or a more perfect specimen.

Meanwhile Cabot's hair and beard grew long and unkempt, and his toga became indescribably filthy. And every day came Yuri to gloat over him. But never again did he bring his whip, and the purple beasts, although they glared at him with the eyes of rage, did nothing further to evidence their intense hatred of him.

One day Yuri brought Lilla. Her compassion at her husband's appearance was pitiful, but what could she do?

"My poor, poor dear, how are you?" she cried.

"Fine," replied Myles, "never felt better in my life. Please don't worry about me. I know I look horribly, but I feel perfectly fit, and with a few more days of rest and wholesome food, I shall be able to wring the necks of at least four out of these five woofuses."

"Good!" exclaimed Yuri, clapping his hands. "Then we shall have capital fun, for I plan to have you fight all five of them in the arena day after to-morrow, for the delectation of our sport-loving people. The two sangths will then be up, and the princess has not relented."

"But please, Yuri, do me one little favor," begged Lilla. "Please let Myles shave, and give him a clean toga for the occasion."

Cabot smiled. How feminine of her! If her husband had to be a corpse, she at least wished him to be a presentable one.

But Yuri was obdurate.

"I am sorry not to be able to do as you wish," he said, "but I can think of no better way to impress upon my deluded people the fact that this Minorian is after all merely a lower animal than to let them see him in his present filthy condition."

"Grant me this one favor," again urged Lilla, "and I will try to be a docile slave."

"You had better be," sneered Yuri, "favor or no favor. Else will I throw you to the Royal Husbands of Queen Formis when I have done with you. I have spoken."

Lilla winced. Cabot noted it, and stiffened.

"Sic 'em," said he, under his breath.

There came a flash of purple and the clink of a taut chain, then a thud, as the largest woofus dropped to the ground with its neck nearly broken. Yuri and Lilla staggered backward affrighted.

"I am content," said Myles to himself. And that night he drilled his pet as never before.

The next day was uneventful. Yuri did not appear, but along toward evening, Formian guards came with poles, and led the five purple beasts away to cells under the stadium. And the earth-man was similarly confined.

It was filthy, and hot, and circus-smelling in his cell, and accordingly he spent a bad night; but when morning came, he felt unusually well, buoyed up by the excitement of the occasion. Shortly after breakfast, he heard the crowds tramping over his head, as they began to fill the stadium.

He knew that his army undoubtedly had word of the "games," by means of the black-light signal-telescopes of Toron, and he knew that they would make every effort to reach the city in time to rescue him. But he was not counting on their aid. He hoped, in fact, to have the tables effectually turned on Yuri, long before their arrival.

Thus he mused, until finally he was led out onto the sands. The seats were nearly filled. All the standing-space was crowded with black Formians. The royal box was occupied by Lilla, Yuri and Queen Formis, surrounded by a bodyguard of ants.

Cabot walked over to the edge of the arena nearest the box and waved to Lilla. At this a sporadic cheer arose, which the king suppressed with a wave of his hand. But there remained a tenseness in the air, as though there were many others present who would like to cheer, but dared not.

Yuri was plainly annoyed, for it was evident that his victim, wretched and bearded though he was, had quite a following in the audience.

Cabot waved again to Lilla.

"Be of good cheer, my princess," he called up to her. "My enemies have had me nearer to death than this before. But 'you cannot kill a Minorian.'"

His supreme confidence reassured Lilla somewhat, and for a moment even Yuri's brow darkened with uncertainty. But then the king smiled quizzically, as one who knows a very amusing secret.

At last the stands were full. Yuri arose, and spoke into the self-same broadcaster which the present victim, before his downfall, had rigged up for the use of the venerable King Kew.

"People of Cupia," said he, "behold Cabot the Minorian, the beast from another world. Long has he deceived you by disguising himself as a Cupian being; but now he stands before you in his true nature: hairy-faced, long-locked, filthy and bestial. It is he who brought war upon this peaceful planet. For that crime he is to die, to be torn to pieces by other creatures no lower than he. And, with his well-deserved death, peace and tranquillity will return upon Poros. Let his punishment be a lesson to those misguided Cupians to whom he has taught the art of war. I have spoken."

A tense silence met the king's words. He paused a moment, expectantly awaiting the cheer that never came, then frowned and raised his hand as a signal. The iron gates at one end of the arena were pulled aside, and out trotted one woofus, then another, and another, and another.

Cabot strained his eyes for the appearance of the fifth woofus, *his* woofus, but it was nowhere to be seen. The iron gates swung shut; and the four beasts, each a match for ten Cupians, trotted out to do him battle.

Upon entering the arena, each woofus blinked its eyes for a few paraparths until it became accustomed to the glare; then stretched itself, and began to sniff and look around and agitate its antennæ.

Finally one of them noticed their prospective victim and called to the others. They pricked up their antennæ, and gazed in Myles's direction. Then all four started a stealthy catlike crawl toward him.

Where, oh, where, was his own trained woofus?

CHAPTER XVIII.

SANGRE Y ARENAS.

THUS collapsed Cabot's plan. Thus went for naught his many nights of instruction!

He had counted on his trained woofus, the largest of the five, to hold off the other four, and perhaps cause a diversion during which he could reach the side of his princess. Had some one guessed his plans, and kept the woofus from him?

The four purple beasts, which had been admitted to the arena for the purpose of making an end of the earth-man, now slowly and stealthily approached their victim, who watched them with fascinated eyes, in more or less of a daze.

"O Minorian, beast from another world," called out Yuri in glee from the stands, "give antennæ unto me! What think you now? Can you *alone* vanquish these four?"

The meaning of his emphasis was most evident, and showed that the king knew that Cabot had counted on the assistance of his trained woofus. Cabot came out of his daze in an instant.

"Not alone, O King," he replied with a meaning all his own, then raised his eyes reverently to Heaven. An angry rustle arose from the stands, like leaves before an approaching storm. Evidently Cabot still had a following in Kuana.

There he stood alone, a stranger from another world, bearded, long-haired, disheveled, and unkempt. A pitiable sight indeed! And yet there was something heroic in his bearing, so that a large section of the populace, remembering his past deeds, were still glad to acclaim him as their leader.

But what good would this following do, for the purple beasts were now nearly upon him in their slow and stealthy approach.

At this moment a crash resounded throughout the stadium, but it was heard by the ears of the earth-man alone. The iron gates gave way, and out bounded a fifth woofus, larger than any of the rest. The woofus shrieked, and Lilla and Yuri both shuddered, but each for a difierent cause: Lilla because she thought that it was a new menace to her husband; Yuri because it represented the one eventuality which he had felt sure he had guarded against. Cabot thrilled.

"Not alone," he repeated, but with a new meaning. "Look well, O King!"

Like a purple streak of lightning, the newcomer shot across the arena with a long-drawn crescendo howl!

The sound of a woofus is indescribable. Myles Cabot has tried many times to describe it to me, but has failed. The nearest that he can come to it is to say that it resembles the noise obtained by placing the receiver of a telephone-set over the mouthpiece, when one wishes to get even with the girl at Central for being particularly and unusually ornery. Also it resembles certain kinds of static, only worse.

But, to go on with the story. As the fifth woofus charged across the sands, the other four heard his battle-cry, and, pausing in their approach toward Cabot, turned and faced the newcomer, who at once stopped in his onrush.

For a few paraparths, the five beasts,

four on one side and one on the other, confronted each other with bristling antennæ.

Then "Sic 'em!" shouted the earth-man.

At that, his pet woofus, electrified, sprang at the other four. A clawing, snarling ball of purple hate resulted, out of which finally catapulted one huge woofus, which fled across the silver sands. The four quickly disentangled themselves and followed. Cabot stood aghast, for his woofus, his brave woofus, was in flight.

Round and round the arena it ran, pursued by the other four. This was a spectacle the like of which had never been vouchsafed to the sport-loving Cupians, or to the bloodthirsty Formians for that matter. It appealed alike to the predominating trait of each race, and the throngs in the stands went wild with enthusiasm, even the supporters of Cabot forgetting their partisanship in their glee.

The fight could now have but one outcome, namely, the ultimate overtaking and overcoming of the pursued; and, after that, a horrible death for the earth-man. Gradually the chase lengthened out, until each pursuer was separated from the next by almost as many parastads as lay between their leader and the beast which fled before them. Cabot sat down in the center of the sands and watched the race with a feeling of strange detachment, scarcely conscious of the fact that, at the end of all this, he was destined to be torn to bits. His only sentiments were sorrow that his pet should have proved a craven, and anxiety for its safety. Why couldn't the woofus die fighting, as befitted a creature trained by Myles Cabot, the Minorian?

With this thought in mind, Myles jumped to his feet and, hastening over to one side of the stadium, stood directly in the path of the oncoming beasts. He heard Lilla gasp in the stands above, and then the woofuses were upon him. His own pet, tired and frantic as it was, saw and recognized its master, and paused to turn one side and so avoid running him down; and, at this instant, Cabot shouted peremptorily: "Sic 'em, Tige! Sic 'em!"

Habit proved stronger than fear. The woofus wheeled, and in an instant had laid its surprised pursuer in the dust.

"Run!" ordered the earth-man, and again the largest woofus fled, followed now by only three enemies.

The line strung out as before, and again circled the stadium. And again the earth-man halted the procession when it reached him. But this time the second pursuing woofus put up a better fight than its predecessor, with the result that the other two caught up, and joined in the fray.

Cabot's woofus was soon lying on its back on the ground, with its three enemies on top of it, but its jaws were firmly fixed in the throat of one of them, and the body of this one protected it in a measure from the other two.

The earth-man stood by, an interested but an impotent onlooker, for there was nothing he could do to help. But at last the underdog wriggled clear of the pile and fled again around the enclosure. This time it was followed by only two, for the second of its enemies lay stretched upon the gory sands.

One of the two pursuers now rapidly gained upon the pursued and overtook it as it reached the opposite side of the stadium from that on which Cabot was standing, so Myles raced across to observe the battle close at hand.

But before he reached the other side the fight was over. His own woofus raised its bloody head aloft with a pæan of triumph and planted its forepaws upon the body of its third victim. The fourth pursuer halted in its mad rush. For a few paraparths the two beasts glared at each other; then, with arched backs and stiffened legs, they slowly circled each other, watching for an opening.

"Divide and conquer," remarked the radio man to himself, then to his pet, "Sic 'em!"

The huge beast sprang at its opponent with a snarl. And now the tables were turned, for it was the other which fled. Round and round the arena they ran, the pursued gradually drawing away from the pursuer.

Myles could see that his own beast was more tired than the other, and, accordingly, he became afraid that even yet the battle might be lost. So hastily deciding upon a rash plan, he placed himself directly in the

path of the oncoming beasts. Straight toward him they came, yet Cabot did not flinch. Then, with a bound, his enemy was upon him, and down he crashed, flat on his back on the silver sands.

But his hands warded off the slathering jaws from his throat. His strength was sufficient for this for just a few moments; and a few moments were enough. With a crunch, the jaws of his own woofus closed on the spine of his enemy, and in another instant the bearded, disheveled, gory earthman and his equally gory purple pet arose from the ground and stood erect, victors of the arena. Four dead forms lay on the bloody sands, bearing mute witness to the efficient combination of brute strength and human cunning which had triumphed that day.

Then the woofus stepped over to its master and rubbed against his side.

Lilla shuddered, and hid her eyes, but Cabot smiled, and, looking down, patted the bloody head.

At this moment the king arose and gave some hurried orders to his guards. It was his undoing. The woofus heard and recognized the voice, and in another instant it had cleared the railing with one bound and was making its way through the frantic throng toward the royal box.

Cabot called and called, but forgotten were his teachings, for the woofus had wind of his maltreater, and was obsessed with a single thought: namely, revenge.

So Cabot followed hastily in the wake of the beast, and easily surmounted the barrier. The whole stadium was in an uproar. Red, yellow and black flags were being waved by the various factions, and cries of "Long life to Cabot, the Minorian! Down with the usurper! Death to the Formians!" filled the air, mingled with cries of fear from those near the royal box, and shots fired by the royal bodyguard. The red pennant of the Kew dynasty predominated. Evidently the place had been intentionally packed with the followers of the dead baby king.

But Cabot had no time to exult over this *coup*, for his every energy was bent upon reaching Lilla in time to save her from the terror which he had loosed upon them.

In spite of Cabot's haste, however, the beast broke through the guards, undeterred by their firing, and reached the royal box before him. Lilla shrieked and cringed to one side, but she had no need to do so, for straight as an arrow flew the huge animal at Yuri, and down went the king with a crash beneath the impact of the beast. Then the Formian bodyguard closed over Yuri, the woofus, Lilla and Queen Formis, in a snarling, fighting, reeking pile.

"To the rescue of the princess!" shouted Myles Cabot, and a full hundred Cupians responded, falling upon the black writhing mass, with swords, pistol-butts, and even chairs.

Cabot stood to one side, directing the attack. As more and more of his faction rallied about him, he formed the latecomers in a cordon, facing outward, so as to keep off any Cupians so rash as to try to assist their king, or any Formians so temerarious as to come to the rescue of their queen.

So intent was the swarming black pile upon getting at the woofus which had Yuri pinned beneath it, that they did not heed the enemy upon their own backs; but those at the bottom of the pile were careful to bridge their bodies, so as to keep the weight off the ant-queen Formis and the Cupian Princess Lilla.

Cabot's Cupians stabbed and hacked and pulled. Occasionally an ant would turn and snap savagely at them. But one by one the black ant-men were crushed and torn away, until at last the bottom of the pile was reached. There on the floor of the royal box lay a battered and bloody purple body, beside a gaping hole which clearly indicated the avenue of escape by which had disappeared Yuri and Formis, with Lilla as their prize. The floor of the box had evidently given way under the weight of the conflict, and through the hole, thus formed, the enemy had escaped.

Cabot and his immediate followers stared at this hole for a mere paraparth; then, realizing the situation, they plunged into the dark depths beneath. The drop was nearly half a parastad, but luckily the hole led into one of the cells for confining beasts of the arena, and the floor was covered deep

with hay which broke their fall. The first few of the company jumped, and then called to their companions that it was all right; but those above delayed in following, for fear of landing on those below. And, during this moment of indecision, those in the cell suddenly found themselves set upon from all sides, for quite a number of ant-men had fallen through with their leaders, and had remained behind to bar the passage.

The fighting was in nearly pitch darkness, but fortunately there was little danger of mistaking friends from foes, for huge ants ten feet long bear but little resemblance to Cupian beings, even in the dark. Nevertheless, the sharp mandibles of the Formians proved effective weapons at close quarters.

Those of the Cupians who had remained on the stands, hearing the shouts of the conflict below, poured into the hole with weapons poised, and struck home whenever they chanced to land upon an enemy.

Finally all was silence, but whether the Formians had all been slain or had merely retired to some nook from which to rush out again and renew the conflict, could not be told. There was no time, however, to stop and find out.

"Quick!" shouted the earth-man, "we must follow the usurper!"

Whereat all the party started groping about to try and discover an exit.

A shout of "Here is the door!" from one of them, and all pressed in his direction, Cabot merely following with the crowd, since his antennæ gave him no clew as to the source of the cry. The door opened into a passageway. In silence the party threaded the dim corridors beneath the stadium, until a sudden turn brought them out into the daylight, facing the city. And, as they debouched, they saw, just out of reach, a kerkool which bore Yuri, Formis and Lilla toward Kuana.

Out of the other exits were pouring a fighting, seething crowd of Cupians and Formians, as on that other day not so long ago, when Prince Yuri had assassinated King Kew at the Peace Day exercises, and had thus made himself king. But this time the red pennants of Kew outnumbered the yellow of Yuri and the black of Formis combined.

Other kerkools were standing beside the stadium. Without awaiting the outcome of the fighting, Cabot and those with him seized the nearest cars and sped after the fleeing king.

Straight for the palace drove Yuri, and straight for the palace drove his pursuers. Yuri arrived there first, entered the capitol grounds and barred the gates, whereat the Kew faction surrounded the entire group of buildings on the top of Kuana hill. They were speedily augmented by the victorious reds from the stadium. Then Cabot and a handful of the more intrepid of his faction battered down one of the palace gates and forced their way inside.

As the door crashed in, the assaulting force was met by a volley of shots, but it had been a bit premature and so most of the bullets went wild. Within the doorway stood rank upon rank of the palace guard, Cupians of unquestioned loyalty to the usurper Yuri, his own personal bodyguard, who had been recruited from the unspeakables of the city by Trisp, the barmango of Kuana. They were armed with rifles.

But before they could recover from their surprise sufficiently to fire a second round, the assaulting party swept in and engaged them in hand to hand combat. Some of the guard possessed revolvers as well as the longer weapon, and so were able to defend themselves manfully at close range, but they were merely thugs who fought for the love of fighting, whereas the attackers were inspired by the enthusiasm of an ideal, the ideal of Cupian freedom which had been engendered by Cabot, the Minorian, in the first War of Liberation, and which now had been born anew in the second. Their onrush proved irresistible, and soon the few remaining survivors of Yuri's guard had fled into the interior of the palace.

Myles and his men stripped the dead of their arms and ammunition, and followed. The grip of an automatic in Cabot's hand gave him new courage.

"Forward for Princess Lilla!" he cried.

And his followers echoed, "For Princess Lilla! Death to the Formians!"

Thus shouting, they threaded their way through the palace corridors, hunting, ever hunting. Many a black ant-man they slew, and many a familiar spot they traversed, but not a sign did they find of Lilla or of her abductors.

The royal palace of Kuana is set upon the crest of Capitol Hill, in the midst of the group of monumental white buildings which comprise the far-famed University of Cupia. Its main elevation looks to the southward across the plaza to the fields and stadium and hills beyond. Surrounding the university group and the palace and the plaza, are the lesser buildings of Kuana, built in stucco in graceful lines, with high-pitched, red-tiled roofs, a style of architecture quite unlike that employed by the ant-men, whose houses are square and chunky affairs, resembling exaggerated piles of toy building blocks.

Because the palace stands upon the summit of a hill, the ground entrances lead into what are practically its cellars; hence the interminable labyrinthine corridors which the earth-man and his supporters now threaded. Every turn, every door, every side hallway had to be approached with utmost caution, to avoid a surprise attack; and at each intersecting or forking corridor, the party divided, so as to defend their flanks.

Thus the numbers with Cabot rapidly dwindled, and soon he found himself searching through the passageways alone. Now he had to proceed with even greater caution. No Cupians did he meet, but time and again, after rounding some turn or mounting some stair, he found himself face to face with a Formian. Usually he was quicker on the draw, for the human hand has a craft unequalled by the claw of an insect, even though the insect may possess a superior brain. Only one Formian whom he encountered fired first, and that one missed, fortunately for Myles.

Thus, step by step, the earth-man emerged from the subterranean depths of the palace cellars to the upper levels.

He had just annihilated one more black antagonist, when he saw approaching him a Cupian in a toga which bore the insignia of the palace guards. Here indeed was a victim greatly to his taste, for he had tired of killing ants, and longed to get his hands on some one closer to King Yuri.

But just as he was about to fire the other spoke. "Stop, Cabot! Do you not know Nan-nan of the Caves of Kar?"

Cabot lowered his weapon in surprise.

"What are you doing here? And in that garb!" he exclaimed. "I scarcely recognize you without your red-embroidered robe."

The young priest smiled.

"Great are the ramifications of the lost religion," said he. "For instance, I might tell you who it was that loosed your pet woofus in the arena this morning when you appealed unto the God of Minos. But, for the present, my duty is merely to lead you to the princess. Follow me."

And back he led Myles Cabot, down again into the depths from which the earth-man had so laboriously fought his way. Finally they halted, and the priest said, "There are reasons why I cannot lead you farther. But you can find the route from here to the princess without difficulty. First right, then left, then straight ahead. And may the Great Builder go with you! I cannot, for I have other work to do."

And he passed Cabot and vanished down the long corridor.

Taking a firm grip on his revolver, Myles strode around the first turn to the right, then around the first turn to the left, and then pressed on until he found the way blocked by a thick heavy curtain. This he flung to one side, and stepped boldly into the room beyond.

The room beyond was circular, about one parastad in diameter. Its roof was vaulted and lit by a single large vapor lamp. A continuous stretch of crimson curtains lined the walls. At the opposite side of the room from that at which he had entered there was a small raised platform. And on this platform stood King Yuri, with Lilla held close in his arms. He was making ardent love to her, which she seemed too tired and beaten to resist. Yuri's torn toga, and the deep scratches on one of his arms showed only too clearly the handiwork of the purple beast on the stands of the stadium.

"Stop!" thundered Cabot, covering the king with his revolver.

Yuri turned and faced his accuser, but still kept one arm around the princess, who stared at Cabot almost unseeing out of dull and weary eyes. The king appeared a bit surprised, but nevertheless maintained the calm which was so typical of him.

"Yuri, your end has come," announced the earth-man, "and with your death there begins a slaughter which shall not cease until every black Formian is driven from the face of this planet. For only so can war be banished forever."

"Is that so?" sneered the king. "And may I ask who it was that first brought war here from Minos?"

Cabot winced. The accusation was true.

"That is neither here nor there," he asserted. "Maybe I did bring war; but, if so, what I have commenced I shall finish."

"Certainly not," exclaimed Yuri, curling his lip in scorn. "Behold, I am unarmed. Is it the custom on your planet to shoot down unarmed men? I had thought better, even of a beast from Minos."

"If you thought so, then you made the mistake of your life," replied Cabot, "for I am no story-book character. Often have I read, in tales of chivalrous adventure, how the hero, having the villain finally at bay, gave him his chance, and then vanquished him in fair fight. If I had only myself to think of, O king, I would fling this gun aside, and strangle you with my bare hands. But what of the princess and of Cupia? I have no right to sacrifice Lilla's happiness and the safety of my country on the altar of my own personal honor. That would be selfish indeed!"

"Wisely spoken," interjected the princess.

"And so," Myles continued, "armed or unarmed, you die!"

And he raised his pistol.

"Just a moment," put in Yuri hurriedly, seeming for the first time a bit perturbed. "Since you entered this chamber a door has automatically slid shut behind you, thus barring your exit. If you do not believe me, you can back up, still keeping me covered, and feel of it. That door is so thick and so secure that you could never break through it. I, and I alone, know the secret of that door. I am not afraid to die, though it is a bit unpleasant to be killed by a coward; but, unless you spare my life, neither you nor the princess will ever leave this room."

"'Better a wise coward than a brave fool,'" quoted Myles from one of Poblath's proverbs.

"That may be," resumed the king testily, "but, as I have said, if you kill me, you will never leave this room. Your only hope of escape is to spare my life."

Cabot considered for a moment. Naturally he did not believe Yuri, yet how simple to test him by trying the door.

Just as he was about to do this, however, he remembered something.

"Your threat holds no terror for me," he asserted. "Nan-nan directed me here. If I do not reappear, he will bring hordes of my followers to batter down your door."

Yuri laughed a sneering laugh.

"You lose!" said he. "Did not this Nan-nan, of whom you speak, wear the uniform of my bodyguard?"

Cabot grudgingly admitted it.

"I thought so," resumed the usurper in triumph. "Know then that I sent Nan-nan to lure you here, so that you might become my victim."

The earth-man's suspicions were aroused. Whom could he trust? Then he reflected that Yuri was unarmed, which fact seemed to knock the bottom out from under his story. An unarmed person would scarcely have given orders to have an armed person sent to him as a prospective victim.

Why not try the door, however. That would determine in a measure whether Yuri lied. But as Myles started to put this plan into effect, he was stayed by the sound of a human voice, a strange and raucous human voice.

Could he be dreaming? Had his mind given way under the strain of his many vicissitudes? For there were no human voices on Poros.

Yet there could be no mistaking the sound. It was not the radiated antennæ speech of Poros. It was a real human voice smiting against his human ears. Cabot stood still in perplexity.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK

Two Step Lou and the Professor

By PAUL DERESCO AUGSBURG

THE ancestral estate of J. Trowbridge Farnsworth had dwindled to one small room over the Four Deuces Bar. Within its soiled, gray walls were gathered, as he himself would have put it, the surviving Lares and Penates of a family once proud, pecunious and well escutcheoned. They consisted of three venerable tintypes, a yellowed parchment proclaiming in Latin that J. Trowbridge Farnsworth was this day awarded a degree in law, a paper-backed copy of Vergil's "Æneid," and twenty-two pawn tickets.

The reason that the entire estate had not been converted into pawn tickets is manifest. Try as he might, J. Trowbridge Farnsworth had never been able to persuade a usurious money lender that the ancestral tintypes, the elaborately lettered diploma, or the rhythmic chronicle of Æneas's wanderings were worth a nickel as security. All the logic which J. Trowbridge Farnsworth could muster, all the eloquent quotations in the original Greek and Latin, all the arguments from authorities both sacred and profane had no effect upon the glittering-eyed uncles behind the counter. They would waggle their heads disdainfully and order him from their shops.

How J. Trowbridge Farnsworth ever got to Pacific Street none of its sorry citizens knew or cared. To the Barbary Coast came strange men and women from every corner of the world—men like the last of the Farnsworths, whose birth had been high and proud; women like Two Step Lou, whose childhood had been spent God knows how or where. There in the demimonde of San Francisco's colorsome past they met in sordid equality: sailor and soldier, miner and gambler, fallen duke and unregenerate gentlemen, shadowy sisters of the old world and the new. Life moved fast in Pacific Street. The music beat its quickening rhythm, then rum flowed swift, the shrieks and laughter grew in hilarity through the

night. Among derelicts like oneself it was easier to forget.

II.

LUCILLE STANLEY—known to Barbary as Two Step Lou—first saw J. Trowbridge Farnsworth in the Four Deuces Bar. A group of grinning malefolk was gathered about the queer little figure with the short gray whiskers, the bloodshot eyes, and the clothes so pitifully unkempt and worn. A brown derby hat, which was just too small, sat comically atop his graying hair. In his buttonhole snuggled a faded white rose.

"What's that you're sayin'?" demanded Terry Watts, Barbary's political boss. "Tell it in English, can't you?"

"I repeat, sir, I crave libation," J. Trowbridge Farnsworth said gravely. His solemn gray eyes, bloodshot though they were, looked frankly up at Watts. They seemed, somehow, to match his voice, so quiet and assured.

"Libation!" roared the politician. "An' what in hell's a crave-libation?"

"I refer to the ambrosia or nectar dispensed by the bailiff yonder," answered J. Trowbridge Farnsworth, nodding courteously at the barkeep. "I lack the requisite pecunia to purchase. Perhaps you will aid me, sir?"

Watts stared incredulously for an instant. Then his eyes traveled about the circle of men clustered around him. They were still grinning—all except the man who was called the Count.

"Say you, are you tryin' to kid me?" Watts shouted, suddenly flaring into anger. "You don't get away with that around me. Now haul out o' here before I bang you one."

He shoved the old man toward the swinging door. The last of the Farnsworths tripped and fell, sprawling in a heap on the floor. Painfully he recovered his derby and arose Then, just before limping into Pacific Street, he turned about and said with the utmost gravity:

"I had no intention of intruding, sir. I merely asked largess with which to purchase a libation. I thought I perceived in you a person of generous motives. I was wrong."

The man they called the Count followed J. Trowbridge Farnsworth out at the door. He had two dollars, gained that afternoon by telling a slumming party the sad story of his life. Gently he led the old fellow across the street to the Queen's Bar and bought him the liquor that he craved. His strange companion's talk, so filled with the classical phrases and legal verbiage of a better day, thrilled the Count with queer old memories. For once he himself had been a gentleman—an Oxford graduate, if you please, and heir apparent to an ancient manor. Then he, too, had taken the road which led to disinheritance and disgrace.

"*Facilis descensus Averno,*" repeated J. Trowbridge Farnsworth, placing an amiable hand on the Count's shoulder. "Fair *adolescens,* a little learning is a dangerous thing; drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring."

He prattled on, repeating couplets by Dryden, reciting of Troy's storied fall as reported by Vergil, quoting entire speeches from the Shakespearean tragedies, and spicing the whole with legal phraseology. He uttered them with slight regard for sequence. They seemed to float in fragments from his sodden memory and roll, in tones delightfully modulated, from his tongue. Once in his discourse he digressed—a delicate compliment for the Count—and explained to the barkeep an allusion just made to Scylla and Charybdis.

"O mixer of potions ambrosial," said J. Trowbridge Farnsworth, "neither you nor your heirs, administrators and assigns can realize the gravity of that *magnum periculum.* As relentlessly as runs the statute of limitations the ship bore on toward that awful vortex. As the Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold—"

"Yes," hiccuped the Count eagerly, "just like the Assyrian down on the wolf fold. A wonderful description, my dear Farnsworth; a perfect description! The wolf folded down on the Assyrian—quite so."

III.

ALL of the foregoing is by way of introducing J. Trowbridge Farnsworth. He soon became a familiar enough figure along Pacific Street—just one more strange dere-

lict cast upon the giddy shores of the Barbary Coast. Slumming parties stared after the gentle old fellow. Tourist guides, quick to appreciate his scenic value, made up a spiel about him that was almost as weird as the own true story of his life. The sorry citizens of Pacific Street dubbed him the Professor.

All called him that except Two Step Lou, the dark and lovely-eyed dance hall girl who helped draw patronage to the Four Deuces Bar. She elected, almost from the start, to call him daddy.

The compliment was a dubious one any way you looked at it, for in its most savory sense the term implied close consanguinity. And Two Step, judging her by the prevailing moral standards, was not much of a credit as any man's daughter. Indeed, there is reason to believe that Two Step was a pretty wicked girl.

A few went so far as to claim she had some of the devil's own blood in her veins. They were thinking, of course, of the time when she tore the coat and collar from a reverend vice investigator and threatened to cut his ears off if he didn't then and there offer up a prayer of gratitude for Pacific Street and the Four Deuces Bar. The account of this unholy incident, together with reports concerning some other manifestations of satanic fury, traveled afar and brought widespread fame to Two Step Lou. She was known by reputation, as you might say, in such diverse ports of call as Shanghai, Santiago, Calcutta and Melbourne.

The reason is plain. Two Step offered a complete enigma to the sailor folk and the gold miners and the others who were likely to celebrate their stay in San Francisco with high revel at the Four Deuces Bar. They couldn't understand her swiftly varying moods, her combination of gentle beauty and fierce wild ways—and so they conceded themselves agnostic and held Two Step properly in admiration and awe. For there were times when this strange young dance hall girl could be as soft and sympathetic as a madonna. The Count, for one, can recall for you the night that a starving little gray kitten tottered under the swinging door and meowed pitifully for food. He'll tell you how Two Step cried like a child as she gathered it up in her bare, white arms and walked across the dance hall toward the kitchen.

It was in this softer mood that she regarded the Professor. That quality of tenderness which had been added, it almost seemed, as the devil's compromise with his opposition forces impelled Two Step from the start to feel a strange interest in the old vagabond. She questioned the Count about him; she made inquiries of others. And then—one night when the fiddles were squeaking and Barbary was madly awhirl—she abruptly left her male companions and walked up to the Professor.

"Hello," she said gently. "Do you—er—crave libation?"

The Professor removed his battered old derby and bowed. His bloodshot, gray eyes seemed to shine as his lips shaped a Latin phrase in compliment of the comely young woman standing before him.

"*Pulchra puella,*" he murmured. "She walks in beauty like the night. Ah, fair daughter, my heart leaps up when I behold a—"

"Now, daddy, you're talking 'way over my head," said Two Step, smiling kindly. "Cut it out, and let's have a drink."

They stood at the bar; the graying old man and the young woman who, in some respects, was just as old as he. She ordered whisky and paid for it with a silver dollar which she took from a little pocket. In those days—not so many years ago, at that—paper money was something of a curiosity in San Francisco. Two Step herself would scorn to accept it as legal tender.

"Here's to death," she called, raising her glass and looking mournfully at the Professor. "Here's hoping it 'll be kind to some of us poor devils."

She drank, and abruptly her manner changed. The somber expression left her eyes. A reckless light shone in them. The dark beauty of her features became suddenly animated and her high heeled slippers twinkled in a little dance. Two Step Lou was shifting moods again.

"Good-by, daddy," she cried gayly, putting her change into the Professor's hand.

Over in a far corner the pianist's fingers

ran nimbly up the keys and broke into a series of lively chords as the fiddler caught the tune. Two Step, throwing her shoulders in a manner which, somehow, seemed naughty, ran laughing back to her male companions. The last of the Farnsworths tipped his funny old derby and bowed.

IV.

THE next time the young woman saw him he was asleep in a darkened doorway just off Pacific Street. There he lay, his coat collar drawn up about his neck, one hand clutching its lapel to keep out the cold from his tired old chest. Two Step Lou, hurrying back to the sign of the Four Deuces, spied the old man and halted. For an instant she peered at his face in the dim light cast from a street lamp.

"You poor old devil!" she murmured. Her voice choked, and she knelt sobbing beside the Professor. Her tears fell on the flaming silken shawl that was wrapped about her white shoulders. Some of them soaked into the worn old fabric of the vagabond's coat.

Two Step Lou woke him and led him to the dance hall. There she talked earnestly with Con Milroy, the proprietor. He shook his head. She stamped an angry foot, and her dark eyes flashed. Then for several seconds things happened fast at the Four Deuces Bar. The flurry of activity concluded when Two Step slapped her employer's face and delivered this ultimatum:

"Listen here, damn you; you do as I say or I'm through! I'm not asking you to *give* me anything. All I'm asking is to *rent* me that little back room for my friend. Either he stays here or I go over to the Flying Dutchman—and I'll take half your customers with me. Now talk fast, Con."

The owner gasped and threw an apprehensive look at Two Step. A bunch of sailors from the Rio Norte, just in after six months' monotonous cruising west of Borneo, raised a hilarious cheer and urged Two Step to black his blankety-blank eyes. Con grinned, shrugging his shoulders as though his opposition had been merely a little joke.

"You win, Lou," he said quickly. For a moment he hesitated; then his curiosity got the better of his judgment. "Suit yourself, Lou," Con went on soothingly. "The room's yours, only—only what's the idea of keeping a half dead bum like that, huh?"

Two Step looked over at the gentle old Professor, still shivering from the cold of that doorway couch. Tears came into her eyes and trembled on her lashes. But only for an instant. Suddenly the old satanic fire, so fascinatingly beautiful, flashed again in those lovely black eyes as she turned them on Milroy.

"None of your damned business!" she snapped—and thus the matter rested.

Why she felt such a strong attachment for the vagabond Barbary's citizens never learned. The Count opined that the Professor probably reminded Two Step of her father, but there were those outspoken and irreverent souls who raised the objection that, if Two Step ever had a father, she certainly never saw him or knew his name. After a time speculation ceased entirely and the dance hall girl's filial relationship to the Professor was taken as an accepted and uninteresting fact.

V.

So the ancestral estate of J. Trowbridge Farnsworth had dwindled to one small room over the Four Deuces Bar. Two Step Lou, whose profession paid her well as money is measured, established his credit with the barkeep for six drinks a day. More than that he was not permitted to have. It wouldn't be good for him, the dance hall entertainer ruled.

But sometimes Two Step would relent and come to the Professor's little room with a bottle. Then they would sit on the shabby cot while he talked of Plutarch and Pliny, Shakespeare and old Dr. Johnson, Dickens and other things of which Two Step had never even heard.

In these subdued moods, when the old fellow's companionship seemed to have a cheering sort of effect upon her, she didn't mind listening to such outlandish chatter. She would smile up at him, for all the world like an encouraging pedagogue, as he discoursed for half an hour at a time about his old hero Socrates or the roving journey

of Ulysses. The latter he liked to compare with Æneas, and Æneas invariably led to a discussion of Cicero, the Latin orator. It was after the daughter of the latter that he one day named the young entertainer Tullia.

Then came the afternoon that Martin Muldoon, the barkeep, stopped Two Step Lou as she was leaving the dance hall and told her of a strange phenomenon. It was nearly four o'clock and the Professor had not called around for a single drink!

She stared dubiously at the barkeep for an instant. Then an expression of alarm came into her face and she rushed to the stairway. Her suspicion was correct. The last of the Farnsworths was lying in bed, almost delirious with pain and suffering.

"Daddy!" cried the woman, taking one worn old hand. "What's happened to you, daddy?"

The Professor's bleared and bloodshot eyes fixed themselves on her pretty face. A slow smile twisted his mouth. His lips moved painfully.

"My little Tullia! My little Tullia!" He stopped and looked about him at the barren walls which bounded his estate. "*Mors venit.* Death is coming to me, little Tullia, and I have squandered the fortune that I would bequeath to you. All that is left—"

He lapsed then into a sort of coma, and Two Step Lou rushed for a doctor. For three weeks then the dance hall roisterers of the Four Deuces Bar saw nothing of her. Con Milroy stormed and argued in vain. The patrons were calling for her. What did she mean wasting her time on an old bum who had lived far too long already?

Two Step Lou flew into a rage at that and threatened to kill the dance hall proprietor if he opened his mouth again. Con retreated downstairs, where he found Terry Watts lounging against the bar. Barbary's political whipcracker listened attentively to Con's tale of woe.

"Aw, don't let that bother you," he counseled, reaching for a fresh cigar. "I'll take care of Lou in a couple of days. She don't like me, but I'm goin' to *make* her like me. I'm startin' for the mountains pretty quick, an' Lou's goin' along with me—see? She don't know it yet, but she is. An' then you can take care of the bum any way you want. Throw him in the bay, Con, if you feel inclined that way."

Meanwhile Two Step Lou attended the Professor. Day and night she was with him, nursing the old vagabond with all the tenderness of a doting daughter. She pulled him through, too, and finally he was able to leave his cot and dress. That day, while the dance hall girl was out, he shuffled uncertainly down the stairs and appeared smiling at the bar.

"My good sir, pray pour me a libation," spoke the last of the Farnsworths. "You are in arrears to me a considerable quantity of ambrosia, but I shall cancel your debt in consideration of one dram. I thank you."

The Professor, to all intents and purposes, had come back.

VI.

All was serene at the Four Deuces for three days after that. The fiddles squeaked, the whisky slopped upon the table tops, the rollicking dance went on—but not a single fight occurred within its walls. No drunken sailors mixed in elemental argument over a woman. No hard citizen from "south o' the slot" attempted to show a government trooper the error of his ways. This superfluity of amity was almost unprecedented. It had an ominous portent.

At least, that's what Martin Muldoon said as he was polishing the glasses on the afternoon of the fourth day. Martin was a veteran along Pacific Street and his counsels were not to be lightly cast aside.

"Something's going to happen," he told Con Milroy. "*There's* a bet you can play on the nose and collect. I ain't seen things so peaceful since the time just before 'Ike the Rabbit' was bumped off for his rocks. You know what they say about it being calm just ahead of a storm. Well?"

"Oh, shut up, Marty. You ought to be a undertaker and pour the embalming fluid in direct—not letting the customer drink his own."

Thus the playful scoffing of Con Milroy, but his barkeep was nevertheless correct. At ten thirty that night Terry Watts strode

into the Four Deuces Bar. He had a suit case in one hand. Under his belt he carried a nasty package of liquor. Watts's eyes were mean and sullen.

"I'm leavin' on the Sacramento boat at midnight," the political boss announced. "Two Step's goin' with me. Where's she at, Con?"

Milroy cast his eyes about the room, heavy with the smoke and fumes of a Barbary night. The musicians were playing a rollicking tune, and the women who entertained at the Four Deuces Bar were dancing with the customers. But nowhere among the pack of revelers could Milroy see the shining black hair and Spanish comb of Two Step Lou.

"Guess she's upstairs, Terry," he said. "If she ain't in her room, try the Professor's.

"All right, Con. So long, an' I'll see you in a couple of weeks." Watts drew the dive keeper close. "She may raise a little hell about leavin'; so I'll just go out that back way an' save havin' any fights with her friends out here. An' remember, Con, the bay's as good a place for the Professor as any. Savvy?"

Watts climbed the narrow stairs and sought Two Step Lou. He found her, as Milroy had suggested, in the small room where the last of the Farnsworths lived among his Lares and Penates. She was sitting on the cot, her handsome features softened in a smile of pity and affection, while the Professor recited the Rubaiyat. He always recited it when he felt particularly remorseful and sore of heart. It seemed to cheer him up; and the dance hall girl, knowing this, would wait patiently through to the end.

But the Rubaiyat was not finished this time. It was stopped in mid-stanza as Watts entered and gruffly bade the last of the Farnsworths to shut his mouth.

"Lou, we've got an hour to catch the boat," he said. "Any clothes you want to take along you can put in this grip."

Fire blazed in the woman's eyes. Her face went suddenly pale as she faced the politician. Instead of retreating before him, she stepped up until they were standing eye to eye.

"What do you mean, Terry Watts? What boat?"

"Oh, ain't Con told you?" He attempted an affable smile. "Why, I thought you knew all about it, Lou. I'm goin' campin' in the mountains for a couple of weeks, an' I picked you as the best little campin' pal in Pacific Street. It'll—it—"

Watts stammered, and then halted under the white glare of Two Step Lou's fierce hate. She didn't speak a word—just stood there, and looked her scorn and rage, and infinite contempt. For an instant he was cowed. Then he became livid with anger.

"Say, you little brat, don't try any stuff like that on me," Watts growled. "I don't care if you like it or not. You're comin' with me, an' *that's* settled."

He gripped her roughly by the arm—a bare, white arm, soft and round, and subtly alluring. His mouth twisted in a cruel snarl as he waited, alert and ready, for the storm that was bound to come. Then the last of the Farnsworths, his kindly old eyes wide and scared, laid a restraining hand on Watts's powerful wrist.

"If your honor please," he began, "this is no proper way of treating a—"

That was all. Watts released Two Step Lou and sent a heavy fist crashing into the old man's face. For the second time the last of the Farnsworths struck the floor. There was a groan. Blood began trickling from his nose.

A sharp cry that was more a gasp came from Two Step Lou. Her eyes were flames of yellow fire as she stepped quickly back, and reached into the bosom of her gown. Out shot her hand; and the knife, gleaming dully in the gaslight, darted forward straight for the politician's breast. He was taken off his guard. Three times the knife struck home, and once it reached his heart. Orestes's Furies, of which the Professor had sometimes spoken, were no more raging, and vengeful than Two Step Lou that night.

Watts slipped quietly to the floor, settled there like a half-filled sack of grain, and then lay motionless and quiet with the knife stuck almost comically in his chest. The room was suddenly still. Downstairs the fiddle squeaked towards a merry crescendo. The piano tinkled on. The

shouts of the sailors sounded faint and indistinct and far away.

Two Step Lou was bending over the Professor.

"Are you much hurt, daddie?" she whispered, stanching the blood flow with a perfumed handkerchief. "Oh, I could kill that rat for hitting you like that. I could kill him with my fists and—"

She stopped, and glanced around at Watts, lying so still behind her. Then she suddenly laughed—a strange, wild laugh, mirthless and hard and bitter.

"Why, I *did* kill him," she said softly, while a startled expression crept into her eyes. "I did kill him, daddied—the dirty rat. Daddie, I *just killed him.*"

The Professor struggled to a sitting posture and blinked uncomprehendingly for a minute. Three times he repeated the word "kill" as though trying to place its meaning. The fiddle was suddenly silent, the piano mute. Downstairs some one was calling drunkenly for Two Step Lou.

"Oh, daddie, what'll I do?" said she.

"Get thee to a nunnery—fly!" said the last of the Farnsworths, unconsciously repeating the words of Shakespeare's Hamlet. Then his voice became calm and poised as he took the young woman's hand. "Don't be afraid, my little Tullia," he told her soothingly. "I won't let anything hurt you. I'm a lawyer. I know how to deal with such actions at the bar of justice. But you must leave at once, my Tullia. Fly from the city while I make such arrangements with the district attorney as may be necessary."

He rose unsteadily, and looked at the body of Terry Watts. For an instant one trembling old hand stroked his gray stubble of a beard.

"A simple case of torts," he announced decisively. "Blackstone cites innumerable precedents. Why, the corpus delicti is already established, my dear, and all you need to do is keep from sight. But you must go at once."

He smiled cheerfully at Two Step Lou, who stared at him with hope and questioning mingled in her eyes.

"Honest, daddie? Will it come out all right if I hide for a while?"

"Yes, my little Tullia. I can handle this case very easily."

She kissed the old fellow then, and rushed to her room. A minute later her light footsteps sounded on the stairs. There was a faint click as the rear door snapped to its lock again.

VII.

For an hour, the last of the Farnsworths sat on his cot, and stared at the man who had been Barbary's political boss. As the time passed by he felt easier. His little Tullia—the girl that was famed in Pacific Street as Two Step Lou, queen of the dance and light o' love to sailormen ashore—should be out of the city by now. Where she was going the Professor did not know. But there were mountains, and mining camps not many hours' ride from San Francisco Bay. There were ranches and forests, and the primitive friendliness of the Mother Lode country where Jimtown and Hangtown thrived in California's days of golden glory. Yes, there were plenty of places close at hand where a lady in distress might find shelter from the world.

Once the Professor rose, and started to move past the dead man towards the door. He wanted a drink to steady his nerves, but the sight of Terry Watts made him change his mind. Some one in the dance hall would be sure to inquire for Two Step Lou. Sighing, the old vagabond sat down again and waited.

It was just a matter of time now. Sooner or later they would come for him. They would carry Terry Watts away to the morgue. They would pluck the knife from his chest as evidence. They would throw the last of the Farnsworths into a cell.

This was an open-and-shut case of homicide. The Professor knew it. His elaborate legal training in a day long dead, was scarcely necessary to tell him that. Suddenly his nose began to bleed again, where the knuckles of the politician had landed their jarring blow. This gave the Professor an inspiration. Hastily, his old hands trembling, he smeared the blood over fingers, and palms, and wrists.

Three o'clock had passed before some

one came to the little rear room. It was Con Milroy, followed by two cutthroat crimps who had agreed to dispose of the old Professor for a trifling piece of money. Their specialty was shanghaiing lusty sailormen; and an elderly vagabond, gentle of voice and mild of manner, wasn't much of a job for such as they. Their price for consigning him to the waters near Fisherman's wharf had been very reasonable.

For an instant the three formed a petrified tableau at the door. Then Con Milroy spoke.

"Terry Watts!" he gasped. "Dead!" he added, advancing a step into the room. "Stuck with a chiv!"

The last of the Farnsworths said nothing. His hands trembled a bit, but his gray and bloodshot eyes looked bravely up at Milroy. The latter's face suddenly darkened with hate, and he spat a dripping oath. Then he darted a look about the room.

"Where's Lou?" he demanded, slipping past the body and grabbing hold of the Professor.

"My good sir, I haven't seen Miss Lou all evening."

"You lie like all hell!" growled Milroy, but his face broke into a triumphant smile. "I know who killed Terry, and I know who's going to swing in her place." He turned on his two companions. "The deal's off, you guys. We don't need to throw the blankety-blank bum into the bay. John Law'll take care o' him now."

VIII.

So the ancestral estate of J. Trowbridge Farnsworth dwindled even smaller. He lay in a murderer's cell hard by the Palace of Justice, only a few short blocks from Pacific Street and the Four Deuces Bar. There newspapermen came to see him and take his picture, for the Professor had become something of a character along the Barbary Coast. Besides, this was not one of your ordinary demimonde killings. Terry Watts had been a power in city politics, and the motive for his murder was intriguingly obscure.

"Why was he killed?" the reporters demanded.

To which the Professor, still the mild, frank, gentle-spoken classicist, would raise his tired gray eyes to the cynical young faces of the scribes and reply:

"The magistrates have acquitted themselves with credit. I am, as they charge, guilty of this homicide. Like Theseus, I slew the dragon who had been devouring the flower of Greece. I rejoice in my accomplishment. It was a deed worthy of Achilles."

"Well, how about Two Step Lou?" the persistent reporters would ask, still unsatisfied. "What's become of her, Professor?"

"I do not know, my good sirs," he would reply, nor could he hide the alarm he felt whenever this question was spoken.

The newspapers laid hold of the story with a will. Their best reporters pounded typewriters which painted sympathetic word pictures of the gentle old vagabond who, it was plain to see, wouldn't harm a fly. Yet he was a confessed murderer! The reporters couldn't swallow that; and their stories, well interspersed with the Professor's classic speech, hinted at the truth behind Watts's violent passing. The citizens of the bay district read and shook their heads in wonderment. Out-of-town subscribers, up in the mountains and valleys of northern California, discussed the strange case in ranch house, cabin, and shack.

But the last of the Farnsworths did not waver from his claim. The grand jury indicted him, and the day came when they arraigned him before a judge. The charges were read.

"Do you plead guilty or not guilty?" asked the court.

"Guilty," was the quiet response.

Then the district attorney presented his evidence against the defendant. Con Milroy took the stand and told of finding the body. The Professor was kicking the dead man in a rage when he burst into the room, Milroy said. His picture of the Professor was a black one: a degenerate who, Con claimed, had once threatened to poison him because he refused him liquor.

The evidence was soon in, and the judge asked the defendant if he had anything to say before sentence was pronounced. It was late afternoon when the last of the

Farnsworths arose and advanced toward the bar. Across the street in Portsmouth Square the loungers were beginning to leave their benches for warmer lodging houses. Time was, more than half a century before, when the square had been the Plaza where civic functions of San Francisco's uncouth youth were summarily transacted. There the Vigilantes conducted their hangings and justice was vindicated at the end of a hempen rope. They were more expedient about such matters then.

The Professor began his little address quietly, courteously, as though he were about to ask the judge for the wherewithal to purchase a libation.

"Your honor," he said, "I feel the Stygian blackness round about me. Already I stand at the *sacra ostia* of the Plutonian realm, with Charon waiting at the ferry to take me over. If it please the court, my offense is rank; it smells to Heaven, and yet who can blame me? He had such a lean and hungry look, this man I slew."

The old vagabond paused and glanced mildly about the court room. His gray eyes, so worn and bloodshot, suddenly filled with tears.

"Your honor, I am a gentleman, as you may have discerned. I was educated for the profession you yourself adorn. Many a lingering taper have I burned at the shrine of Sir Edward Coke and Mr. Justice Blackstone. But, alas, I was destined for other fates. There is, it is said, a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will. I do not complain." Raising his right hand, so lean and wasted, he advanced a faltering step.

"*Ave, Cæsar! Morituri te salutamus!*" he said solemnly in the language of the Roman gladiators hailing Cæsar before battling to their death.

Then, bowing to the judge, the last of the Farnsworths took his seat.

For several seconds the court room was as silent as a murderer's grave. The spectators seemed to stop breathing. The reporters had dropped their pencils. The district attorney stood motionless, biting his lip. Up on the bench the judge sat as one transfixed. His eyes were moist. One hand gripped his chair.

The silence ended with a sob—a long, convulsive sob, as though a heart was breaking of its sorrow. The court room sprang to life again. Reporters jumped to their feet. The district attorney whirled about. The spectators suddenly straightened on their benches.

Then a girl darted from her seat in the rear of the room and rushed down the aisle. She halted beside the Professor's chair. With a single gesture she threw back her heavy veil.

"Daddie!" she called, and the next instant her arms were around the old fellow's neck and she was sobbing on his shoulder.

"My little Tullia!" murmured the last of the Farnsworths. Then, as the meaning of it all came to him, his voice quavered. "You must flee at once," he whispered. "Quick, my dear, before it is too late."

But now the bailiff had recovered from his amazement and was rapping for order. A deputy sprang forward to drag Two Step Lou away from the defendant. Her eyes flashed angrily as he seized her. She hissed an oath—a hot, ugly oath, pungent of Barbary's fetid gutters—and two white hands shot out like clawed paws of the jungle. The deputy fell away, dismayed, under the fierceness of Two Step Lou's catlike attack.

"Stand back *you!*" she spat menacingly, and into that pronoun she put all the contemptuous meaning of half a dozen burning epithets. Then she turned those fascinating, wild black eyes upon the court. "Judge," she cried, ignoring the impatient pounding of his gavel, "it's all a bunch of lies. Everybody's lied to you. Even daddie lied; and that damned skunk over there"—indicating Con Milroy with a darting finger—"he lied worst of all."

For a second it seemed that Two Step might leap across the room and throttle Milroy, so fierce was the hatred that darkened her face. But it was only a dramatic pause—an instant of ominous quiet before that crashing climax when she threw back her head and, pointing a strangely delicate hand at the judge, shouted her defiant confession of guilt:

"*I* killed Terry Watts! *I* killed him, I

tell you! I stabbed him to death with this here hand, judge—just because he slugged daddie, a poor old man who never done him any harm in all his life. Knocked him down, the yellow skunk; knocked him down for no reason at all. That's why I killed him, judge. That's why I killed him —*and I'm glad I done it!*"

She shrieked those last words. They shot from her tongue in a final mad burst of frenzy, seeming to invest the atmosphere of the court room with an eerie chill that made the blood of her hearers run suddenly cold.

It was the end of Two Step's passionate mood. The next instant she was softly sobbing, her head buried in her arms on the shelflike ledge where the attorneys rest their law books while they argue. It was a subdued, quiet, almost apologetic little girl who looked up at the judge a few seconds later, and spoke in a low, sorrowful voice that, somehow, went straight to the listener's heart.

"Daddie told me to run away," she said. "He told me he was a lawyer, judge, and he could have the case all fixed. I didn't know *he* was going to take the blame for—for what I done. Honest, judge, not until I seen it in the papers—"

The dance hall girl choked. Her sentence ended in a sob, and once more the wistfully-beautiful face was hidden in her arms. The last of the Farnsworths rose as if to comfort her. He raised a scared, pale countenance towards the judge and, attempted to speak.

"Your honor, she is perjuring herself," he said hoarsely. He was about to say more, but the district attorney interrupted him. The prosecutor's face was strangely kind as he took his place before the bar. He was smiling.

"If your honor please," he began, taking out his watch, and slowly winding it, "if your honor please, the circumstances attending this case are the strangest I have ever encountered in my twenty odd years of criminal practice. Just what motive lies behind such an unprecedented effort at self-sacrifice isn't yet plain, but I am satisfied that this woman has told the truth, and that the defendant has tried to take her punishment upon himself. Therefore, if it please the court, the State pressed the charges against Mr. Farnsworth."

The judge nodded, and the district attorney's eyes wandered away towards the window overlooking Portsmouth Square. There was a dreamy sort of look in them, as though he might be thinking of those bygone days when the Vigilantes' hemp tightened about the necks of the murderous Sidney Coves.

Perhaps it was such a thought that suddenly stiffened the prosecutor's chin, and brought something like a glint back to his eyes. After all, he had a sworn duty to perform and a heritage of stern justice to follow. His words came almost crisply as he resumed:

"It is evident, your honor, that Terry Watts didn't come to his death unaided. He was deliberately murdered, and this woman"—pointing to Two Step Lou—"backs a suspicion I have had for some time that the crime was not committed by a man. I request that she be arrested, and held without bail on a charge of first-degree murder, and I shall see to it that a speedy indictment follows. I also ask that Farnsworth be kept in custody on a charge of perjury."

The judge seemed about to demur, but the district attorney hastened to explain himself.

"A technical charge, your honor," he said. "It is apparent that Farnsworth was the only witness to the murder. Therefore, on a probable plea of 'not guilty' by this woman, his testimony will be absolutely essential for conviction. That's why I want him held, for otherwise he would undoubtedly disappear, and leave the district attorney with a hopeless, circumstantial case. And this time"—with a significant smile—"I shall see to it that the witness is less chivalrous and more truthful when he appears before your honor."

Tears filled the last of the Farnsworths' eyes. His sorry little outcast world had suddenly come crashing down about his ears. He had been a failure all his life. Even this last pitiful little effort to do something really decent had ended in mockery and defeat. Life had beaten him at every turn.

But the old fellow, in this moment of unalloyed bitterness, reckoned without his heart, so weakened by whisky and privation and the ravages of that recent sickness. The present excitement was more than it could stand. Scarcely had the prosecutor stopped speaking when J. Trowbridge Farnsworth realized, abruptly, and with all the clarity of a lightning flash across the blackened sky, that he was not to die a failure. He knew just a moment before it came what was about to happen. Two Step Lou heard him call her name and answered:

"Yes, daddie."

"Plead 'not guilty' my little Tullia," he gasped. "*Pax tecum, carissima.*"

A faint smile came over his face. The tired old eyes slowly closed. For the barest second he held himself erect.

Then his head fell forward. There was a brief convulsion, a little sigh, and the last of the Farnsworths lay dead before the bar of justice. But the smile still remained upon the old vagabond's lips—a smile of triumph and joy and everlasting peace. For he had won his first and last law case after all these years of wasting, and roaming—won a complete victory, he and his new-found partner, Death.

THE END

REVERIE

WHEN nymphs roamed through the woodlands,
And all the world was young,
And spring revived the earth, dear,
With rondels softly sung:

And little buds were blooming,
And singing birds atilt,
And all the world was sweet then,
And no one thought of guilt;

Then love was made for lovers,
And no thoughts were amiss,
Then woods held mystic shadows,
Each shadow held a kiss.

Then hand in hand we wandered
With throbbing hearts and true;
And though my lips were silent,
Each thought was all for you.

Your fondling hand and eyes, dear,
Drove other thoughts away—
Suppose Time's page flew backward,
Made Arcady to-day?

Would you and I then wander
Through shady, fragrant dell
And seek the dusky shadows?
Who knows? And who would tell?

Mary Adams Stearns.

Señor Jingle Bells

By MAX BRAND

Author of "The Untamed," "Dan Barry's Daughter," etc.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE INSURMOUNTABLE ALTAR.

"WHAT is it?" gasped the Rev. Mr. Clary. "Do you hear them calling me, Mr. Albert?"

"I shall answer for you, however," said El Cantor. "You will stay here, my friend, and the door is not to be opened. The door is not to be opened!"

He repeated it solemnly, then he called loudly: "Gentlemen, this is El Cantor, alias Jingle-Bells!"

A shout of anger and of triumph answered him; then a voice rang in his ear.

"And this is Hugh Nichols! Do you hear me? There is a score between us which shall be settled if ever I have thirty seconds alone with you!"

"Hugh Nichols!" cried Peggy Swain.

"You've ended your dance, Jingle-Bells," said the sheriff outside the door. "You might as well let us in. I'll tell you this. What we have against you is not murder. Matter of fact, it's something that might even be settled out of court. Will you listen to reason, Jingle-Bells?"

"Mr. Long," El Cantor replied, "I trust that you will put some credit in what I have to say when I swear to you that if there is a noise again at either of those doors, I shall begin shooting through them. Will you believe me?"

"He's gonna hang himself before he gets through with it, and it ain't gonna be long before he's through," said one of those near the sheriff.

And another added: "Why not haul off

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and go slam through the door? Maybe he wouldn't get none of us!"

The sheriff regarded these speakers with a sort of sublime contempt; and without a word to them, as if what they had had to say was really not worthy of any answer other than silence, he turned to his own thoughts.

As for Señor Jingle-Bells, he had slipped across the room after speaking, and knelt beside the door with his ear pressed to the crack so that he could hear whatever murmurs were nearest. Of one thing he was sure, having listened to the mumbled proposals for making a rush, that the sheriff was not yet keyed to the point at which he would be willing to take such a desperate chance.

Then he arose and glided back.

"Peggy!" he called in a loud whisper.

She came to him without a word. He felt the touch of her hand lightly on his arm and a light, light fragrance of her hair beside him.

"We are about to begin and go through with the thing," he told her.

He added in another whisper: "Clary!"

There was a faint groan from the minister.

"You start the wedding service now."

"Blasphemy!" groaned the poor minister.

"Do you hear me? Begin!"

The voice of the minister answered:

"Does any person in this presence know any reason—"

"Not too loudly!" cautioned El Cantor.

"Ah, man," groaned the minister, "I fear that you are putting a cross against your name in the sight of Heaven!"

"That may be. I shall take my chance of Heaven after I have this girl. Continue!"

"Young man, I cannot and I shall not!"

"By the eternal God!" cried El Cantor, "I shall make that sure first. Do you think—old man—old fool—that I would stop at anything, having gone as far as this? Continue with the service."

"Our Father in Heaven forgive me!" breathed John Clary. "I shall be murdered if I do not!"

He repeated the last sentence hastily:

"Does any person in this presence know any reason why this man and woman should not be joined in the bonds of holy matrimony? If so, speak or forever hold your peace!"

Here there was a crash at the right hand door leading into the room. Instantly the gun which was balanced in the hand of El Cantor exploded and was answered by a scream at the farther side of the door, followed by a wild scrambling and roars of rage and fear.

And in the black of the room, the shriek of the terrified girl was like a sudden flare of blinding light. It made the minister himself cry out aloud.

"Steady, steady!" urged El Cantor. "I fired high. They only heard the hum of the bullet and thought they were dead men. They are a crowd of cowards and fools, Peggy. Confound them, they are not worth a thought from you."

"I am quite able to stand," said she coldly. "I do not need your hand."

"Very well, now—"

Here all sound of voices was drowned by a fresh clamoring outside the house.

"Go on!" commanded El Cantor. "The entire town is up now, and packed around the parson's house. Man, man, do you think that I can wait here all night?"

"Repeat, after me," said John Clary. "I, John, take thee, Mary—God make me strong!" broke in the minister. "I cannot say it—I shall not say it, not though I am murdered for it. I shall not say it without the consent of the lady."

"Do you consent, Peggy?" asked El Cantor hoarsely.

"Yes."

He added in a sort of frenzy: "Do you hear me? You have only to say no, and I shall give you up. One syllable, one breath from you is enough to put an end to all of this!"

"Not a single word from me!" the girl replied. "I shall do what I have promised to do. To the last letter! I have given you my word of honor, John!"

"Repeat after me," said the minister again. "I, John, take thee, Mary—"

"No, no!" exclaimed El Cantor suddenly. "I thought I could do it—half for the devil that it is in me, and half for the sake of laughing at them all—but I cannot,

Peggy. By God, there is one woman in the world, and no more. There is one woman in the world, and that is you, Peggy!

"D'you hear me? You are free from your promise. You are perfectly safe and free! I give you up and all the claim that I had upon you, which was never any real hold at all."

"Young man, young man!" exclaimed the minister, "who will say that there is no power in prayer or that I have not been heard by our Father? As for you, John Albert, you will live to bless the day—"

"Old fool," said this irreverent youngster, "will you be quiet? Peggy, I want you to understand before I leave you. It is not fear of those dolts and clods outside the door. They are nothing to me. A million of them could not keep me from marrying you.

"But it is because I love you, dear. I love you with such a great heart and will to own you freely, that I could not touch so much as the hem of your skirt without your willingness. Only this once, Peggy—this last time—to hold you close, to dream for an instant that you are mine—so, good-by!"

He sprang back from her. The shout of the sheriff was beating through the wall:

"Jingle-Bells, we've made up our minds to the sacrifice. You may wound one or two of us—you may even kill one or two of us—but it's not to be said that Gloryville was ever bluffed back by one man. We're going to break down that door, man, which is just in front of us here, and after we get inside, we're going to tear you to pieces if you've pulled a trigger. Do you understand me?"

"Sheriff," cried Jingle-Bells, "if you try it, this room is going to run blood. I warn you!"

"Is that final?"

"It is!"

"Then—God have mercy on you, Jingle-Bells, because we'll have none! Boys, will you stand by me? Are you ready to take a hand?"

"Keep back, sheriff," came the strong, young voice of Hugh Nichols. "You're an old man—very nearly. This is the work for young men like me. Fellows, we're going to smash that door flat. Get ready. Give it your shoulders as you hit it—the pad of your shoulder muscles! It 'll have to go down—are you ready?"

"Ready!"

At that the gun spoke from the hand of El Cantor. It was answered by a shout as the human avalanche outside struck the door mightily. But the whir of the bullet had broken the ranks of the living battering ram, so it seemed, and the shock lacked solidity. So that although the door groaned, and there was the sharp creak of a half broken hinge, it did not quite give way.

"No one hurt—he's shooting wild—remember, boys, he has no light to see by. Try that door again, and when it goes down, remember—no guns! There's a woman in that room—we'll take El Cantor with our bare hands—and then we'll break his neck for him!"

A hand found the arm of El Cantor.

"John," she said, "call out to them that you surrender—they'll murder you otherwise—they mean it—Hugh Nichols is a terrible fighting man—surrender—John!" She raised her voice: "Hugh! Hugh! He has surrendered!"

"Let me hear him say it!" cried Nichols.

"You'll hear me, damn you," responded El Cantor calmly. "But you'll hear nothing else. Touch that door again and you're a dead man, Nichols."

"Do you give me that dare?" cried Nichols outside the door. "Man, if there were ten like you I'd never take it—are you ready, friend?"

But El Cantor was at the door first, and a twist of the key freed the bolt of the lock. Then he stepped back.

"Hugh!" cried Margaret Swain. "He's one man against all of you!"

"Let him mind himself!" answered Nichols. "All together!"

They struck the door and, braced as they were for a heavy shock, when it flew open before them without the slightest rub of resistance, four men shot through the door way and sprawled heavily upon the floor. And two more, just behind them, who had started to follow the rush, checked themselves too late and flundered into the kicking mass of feet and legs.

In another moment they, too, were down, and before the mass of humanity could untangle itself, El Cantor had leaped across the threshold. There arose before him only one man, and that was the sheriff himself —but it was the sheriff without a gun in his hand. True to the directions which he had given the rest of the men, he was making ready to enter that room with bare hands.

But bare hands against El Cantor were like empty air against the lightning flash. A wrist of whipcord, a fist of iron flashed into the face of big Walter Long, and he dropped back against the wall with a resounding thump, while through the hallway past him darted El Cantor.

And the first man to regain his feet from the floor of the room was Hugh Nichols, raging, raving with fury. From the corner of his eye he saw the fugitive leap away around a corner of the hallway. But that was his only glimpse of El Cantor, who the next moment dived through an open window, landed rolling on the lawn outside and was away.

CHAPTER XXIX.

NOT BORN TO THE DUELLO.

HEN PEARSON saw the fugitive in the very act of landing on the lawn. Mr. Pearson had brought along an old relic of his stage driving days. Those had been times when the driver had to be a combination of horse-tamer and adventurous knight. Mr. Pearson had qualified.

He had a wrist of iron, the vocabulary of a muletter, and in the way of weapons he was fondest of an old double-barreled shotgun, which had been sawed off and which threw two handfuls of deadly slugs.

He recognized the man who was attempting to escape the instant he appeared at the window. Therefore, Mr. Pearson was ready, and when El Cantor struck the lawn, Mr. Pearson at one tremendous volley poured into his body two dozen or so chucks of lead.

In spite of this, El Cantor rolled lightly to his feet and sprang along to the hedge, over which he leaped—but not undisturbed. Ham Lawrence, the crack hunter and marvelous rifleman, whether at game on foot or at a standing target at any distance, was near at hand with his Winchester tucked under his arm.

He had seen El Cantor pass through the shower of lead from Hen Pearson's gun. He himself was determined that it should not be said that any creature could pass within twenty paces of his rifle's muzzle and pass on alive—if he willed otherwise!

He tucked the butt of his favorite gun into the hollow of his shoulder, took a deliberate aim with a hand of iron, an arm like a rock supporting the long and glimmering barrel of his gun. Then as El Cantor reached the hedge he fired. He shot for the head, so confident was he even in the starlight.

When El Cantor bounded into the air, Ham was certain that it was the death leap. But when El Cantor landed on the farther side of the hedge, still running, he snapped up his rifle once more and through a gap in the hedge let drive again, once, twice, thrice and again. But El Cantor did not fall!

He sped on, and as he ran, a shrill, high pitched whistle streamed back behind him on the wind. It was three times repeated in short blasts, and then three times again. Somewhere in the distance a horse neighed.

In the meantime two score of madmen were raging through the house of the parson and streaming outdoors again. The sheriff, gasping orders from one side of his battered mouth, ran for his horse and mounted it. Hugh Nichols did not have a mount at hand, of course, but he paid no attention to property rights. There were a dozen horses across the street, each with a saddle on its back. He picked the most likely and leaped onto its back.

"Hey, thief!" yelled the true owner, sprinting up.

"Out of my way!" shouted Nichols, and rushed past as if on wings.

The sheriff was before him leading the way, and the others rushed close at his heels.

A voice sang out: "Bullets don't faze him. It 'll take knife-work to settle his hash!"

Knife work? It would have taken a lightning flash to overtake him. Hugh Nichols had ridden thoroughbreds in many a hunting field and, therefore, he was no poor judge of speed. That horse beneath him had ample foot to account for itself in any other than racing company, but although Nichols overhauled the sheriff, they had not a chance.

The sharp whistle of the fugitive came again. Then out of the dark to one side flashed another horse, saddled, but without a rider. It shot past El Cantor—not past him, indeed, for as it flew along, it checked its stride ever so slightly and behold, he was up on the back of the red-bay stallion—red-bay that shone like blood as it shot through the flare of light that rolled out through an open front doorway. Then away he went, as a bird flies out from the tree, so went Monsieur le Duc away from his pursuers.

They lost sight of him around the shoulder of the first hill beyond the town. When they reached that point, he was nowhere to be seen and they pushed ahead, cursing and raging through the crowded hilltops.

But El Cantor had turned and was riding fast back to the town. He cast a half circle around it and found it alive with noise and confusion. Every one was up. Every one was dressed or half dressed. Swinging lanterns shone here and there. The windows were lighted. And now and then hoofbeats rattled away down the street as some other recruit for the posse, having caught, saddled and mounted his favorite horse, fled away through the night hoping against hope that he might come up with the others in time to see the finale of that wild night's work.

El Cantor left *monsieur* in a cluster of trees and remained there a moment with him, rubbing the velvet muzzle of the stallion with the palm of his hand, and laughing softly at the hubbub they had raised.

After a moment he went on toward the town, twisted between two outlying houses, and so came straight behind the home of Señor Alvarez. The garden was full of people. He lay flat on the cool ground near the gate and listened. What a torrent of chatter!

"It was all because he would marry Margaret Swain."

"But he didn't."

"It was a trick then."

"Think of risking one's neck for the sake of such a thing."

"Perhaps it was all to have the pleasure of refusing her!"

Thus ran those soft voices in Spanish. El Cantor listened and smiled solemnly to himself. And when the rattling died down a little, he glided through the gate and waited in the shadow until there was a chance to see the girl alone. The other women had heard some vague tale from the street and were hurrying to learn the truth about it. Then Alvarez himself hurried into the house. And El Cantor, like a gliding wolf, was through the maze of bushes.

He came straight up before her and bowed.

"*Señorita,*" said he, "I could not leave before I had seen you again!"

"Ah, God help me, it is he!" cried the girl. She ran to him and caught him by the shoulders. She shook him, or tried to shake him.

"Tell me! Tell me! You did *not* marry her!"

"I did not," said he.

"Mercy of Heaven—what have I done?"

"Nothing. It is nothing."

"Ah, my dear! Can you forgive?"

"Such a little thing?"

"They might have murdered you!"

"Murder? It is my profession to have my neck in danger. It is nothing. But what did they do with you?"

"They told me—about Señorita Swain. I could not stand it, dear; and—and—I made Mateo tell them everything."

"It is he, then?" said El Cantor.

He removed her hands and held her away from him with a sudden sternness.

"It is Mateo who gave them what they wish to know?"

"Yes—no! Oh, God, what do you intend to do? You have not forgiven me—you have not forgiven me!"

"My dear," he announced, and his teeth gleamed behind a mirthless smile, "I always forgive a lady, no matter what she may have done. But Mateo—"

"*Señor*—it was not his fault—I told him —that you had deceived me—and made me a tool—"

"And, therefore, he was willing to betray me? *Adios, señorita!*"

"*Señor,* if I give the alarm—"

"Listen, foolish child," said El Cantor, "I cannot touch a girl, but consider your fat father and his family. Consider that, Alicia, and beware. I see you for the last time, but perhaps your friends will see me again!"

He was gone through the gate, swiftly across the gap to his horse and then away down the outleading road until he came, some three miles out, to a great widespread ranch house in the Spanish style. He passed straight into the patio and cried out aloud: "Don Mateo! Don Mateo!"

A window was slammed open above him: "What is it, at this hour when honest men are sleeping?"

"Important news for Don Mateo."

"From whom?"

"The Señorita Alvarez."

"Ah?"

The obscure head disappeared. There was a stir in the house, and presently the door of the house was cast open and into the patio ran Don Mateo, half dressed, all breathless.

"From the Señorita Alicia!" he cried. "What is the—"

Then he saw El Cantor and understood. Instinctively his hand went where the revolver should have been, but there was no weapon on him.

"You have caught me!" he said calmly to the other, and folded his arms, disdaining either to flee or to beg for his life.

"What shall I do with you?"

"You consult me on that point. You are pleasant, *señor*."

"Don Mateo, you have betrayed me."

Don Mateo shrugged his shoulders.

"As you please," he remarked. "Some might say that I brought justice up with you; you call it betrayal."

"You confess, then?"

"Confess?" exclaimed the young Mexican proudly. "I tell you, *señor*, that there has been nothing shameworthy in my conduct."

"At least," said El Cantor through his teeth, in a sudden fury, "at least, nothing that cannot be wiped away."

"I understand you perfectly. You mean in blood. Very well, *señor*, I am defenseless, but I shall not either run or kneel."

"Idiot," snarled El Cantor. "Do you dream that I mean murder? This is for you!"

He tossed a revolver through the air and Don Mateo caught it dexterously enough.

"Are you ready, Don Mateo? Then begin."

"I scorn an advantage, *señor*. You may move first."

"As you will!"

And with that, he whipped out his revolver with a vicious speed. Long, long before the weapon in the hand of Don Mateo was leveled, Jingle-Bells had pulled the trigger.

But there was only a loud click as the hammer descended—the faulty shell did not explode.

A fresh chamber was under the hammer, but El Cantor did not fire. For yonder was Don Mateo, his gun hanging at his side again.

"You did not fire, *señor?*" breathed El Cantor.

"I was so much slower," admitted Don Mateo, "that I had time to see your difficulty."

"And seeing that difficulty you did not take advantage?"

"My friend, I am not a murderer!"

"By God, Don Mateo, you have placed me under an obligation."

The youth could not restrain a smile.

"It was not a great gift. I would not have been able to hit you even if I had fired. I have no talent for this sort of thing."

El Cantor slowly shoved his revolver into the holster again.

"*Señor,*" said he, "with your permission, I apologize for having called you from your sleep."

"*Señor,*" said the other with an equal formality, "it has been a delight to see you again."

"You are kind."

"Indeed, *señor*, I feel that I have killed a most terrible enemy!"

El Cantor started. Then he thrust forth his hand.

"Don Mateo," said he, "it is true. I came here to destroy you. I leave you convinced that you have done nothing which a man of honor would not have done."

Their hands joined.

"And yet, my friend," said Don Mateo, "how did you manage to escape? But you were warned. You did not go to the town to-night."

"I was through the fire. I wear a charmed life," El Cantor replied. "And another thing: You may tell the charming Alicia that I have forgiven her, also."

"Before you go, Señor El Cantor, a glass of brandy—"

"I have no time. *Adios.*"

"*Adios, amigo.*"

And the fugitive, retiring to Monsieur le Duc, mounted and galloped away through the dark—the deepest dark of all, for the first early penciling of dawn was about to streak around the outlines of the hills.

CHAPTER XXX.

LOVE ALL AWRY.

SHERIFF WALTER LONG, like many men of natural great good-humor, was slow to anger but, once aroused, clung to his purpose like a bulldog. He clung to it now, while the others wearied of the chase and felt its futility. Still he pushed straightway through the hills, working his men back and forth and combing every hollow until they were far from Gloryville and the light of the dawn began to stream up through the eastern sky.

But when they saw a living figure before them, it was not a mounted man, but a giant striding on foot across the brow of a hill against the sunrise. The sheriff recognized the outlines of that form, even at such a distance.

"We've missed El Cantor," he said, "but we have the next best bet. It's Little Samuel!"

They swarmed around the great negro, reining in their horses with triumphant whoops.

Little Samuel affected to greet them with great joviality, taking off his hat and waving it.

"Well, Mister Sheriff," said he, "dog-gone me if it ain't been a lonesome walk across these here hills. There ain't nothin' more sort of convenient to me than havin' you along to keep me company—"

"Sam," broke in the sheriff, "where's your master?"

"Mister Sheriff," Little Samuel replied. "I ain't got no master. I'm a free nigger, Mr. Long."

"Mind your tongue," the sheriff declared, "or you'll be free a damned short time. Sam, I want to know where Jingle-Bells may be found."

"I'm aimin' to find out the same thing," said Little Samuel. "I was figgerin' that one of you gents might know where I'd find him."

The sheriff could not help smiling, a grim smile in the faint morning light.

"Well, Sam," said he, "I suppose it'll have to be an argument. If—"

But here Hugh Nichols, riding up beside the sheriff, came fully before Little Samuel.

"You black rascal," Nichols remarked, but without passion in his voice, "do you think I have cause enough for putting you in jail?"

"Lord God save us!" cried Little Samuel. "Mr. Nichols, you ain't gonna hold a little joke agin me?"

"A little bullet," said Nichols, "which combed through the air a few feet above my head—was that a joke, Sam?"

"A joke?" Little Samuel exclaimed. "I'll tell a man. Why, sir, if I'd been aimin' to drill you clean, it wouldn't of been—"

"You can tell that to the judge," said the sheriff. "Sam, you're under arrest."

Little Samuel shouted with rage and apparently with wonder.

"It's a outrage," he declared. "They ain't nothin' agin me. I ain't done nothin'. I'm—"

"Steady," said the sheriff, solemnly, "because everything you say now may be used against you!"

The great mouth of Little Samuel closed tight; thereafter, he said not a word as he was escorted back toward the town. Only,

when they had gone a quarter of a mile, the sheriff rode in front of his prisoner.

"Sam," he began, "I reckon you know that this is gonna be a pretty bad trouble for you?"

"I ain't talkin'," said Little Samuel.

"Sure you ain't, except to me. I'm your friend, Sam. I ain't here to take no advantage of you in nothin'. I want to see you and every other gent get a free break and a chance to clear themselves.

"But the skunk that I'm after is this here Jingle-Bells. He's showed up the town and made a fool out of me, squeezing through the whole lot of us and gettin' clean away. We've got to have him and we're gonna get him.

"But if you could help us to land him pronto, it'd be a lot easier for you, Sam. I'll tell you this—if you was to give us a quick chance at him, you'd go plumb free and get a ticket to another town. You hear?"

Sam swallowed hard.

"But if you don't," said the sheriff, "you're in bad trouble."

"A little joke on Mr. Nichols—" began Sam lamely.

"A little joke? Lemme tell you, Sam, that that sort of a joke—you know what it is?—it's kidnapin'—and that's just the same as murder. Doggoned if they couldn't hang you for a thing like that; or the least sort of a sentence they could give you would be fifteen years—"

"Hangin'—fifteen years—my God!" cried Little Samuel. "It ain't true!"

"You black fool!" said the sheriff. "Don't you see that this scoundrel El Cantor has made a tool out of you and that he has given you the slip to let you stand the punishment while he gets away—if he can?"

Little Samuel considered, and then he shook his head.

"If I was to talk about El Cantor, d'you know what he'd do to me?"

"What could he do?"

"Burnin' alive would be about his size," decided Little Samuel thoughtfully.

"So tell us what we want to know, and we'll clap him behind bars—that's the end of him!"

"Him? Bars ain't made that'll keep him safe!" Little Samuel announced. "He'd squeeze out through a knot-hole, doggone him!"

No persuasion could move him. And so, formally arrested for the crime of making an assault upon Hugh Nichols and illegally confining his person, the big negro was herded back toward Gloryville.

It was full morning, with a hot sun riding high, when they arrived. But Gloryville was quiet as night. For the strain of all that had happened since midnight had made men and women sleep late. As for Hugh Nichols, he found a room in the hotel, flung himself upon it, and slept as one drugged with fatigue until mid-afternoon. Then he rose, drank two steaming cups of thick, black coffee, and then went to find Margaret Swain.

She and her father had been accommodated at the parsonage. The parson himself was met by Nichols in the garden of the old house—a pale and shaken parson walking nervously back and forth. When the gate slammed behind Nichols, he jumped as if he had heard a gun explode. The Easterner introduced himself and was greeted with a faint handclasp.

"Mr. Nichols," he said, "the world has gone mad, or I have gone mad! Or perhaps you have a theory. How did El Cantor break into the house without being seen last night?"

"It is a hard problem," admitted Nichols, "unless he was in here all the time."

"Before they came?"

"Yes."

"No, no!" the parson asserted. "I know that he is a man with nerves of steel, but not even he would have dared to do such a thing. He could not! And yet, Nichols," he added, clutching the arm of the big man, "when I was in that room with him, when the rest of you were at the doors trying to beat them in, his voice was as cool as yours or mine at this moment! At this moment!"

In the house, he found Margaret Swain at once; the parson brought him to her in the library, and she stood up, pale and smiling, to greet him. All the weariness

dropped from the body of Nichols; he stood before her like a thoroughbred trembling at the post and ready for the race—so eager were his eyes, so tensed was his smile.

" Dear Hugh," said she, " I'm as grateful to you as though everything had worked out as you planned."

" Only tell me one thing," said he, still holding her hands. " How has your father managed? I didn't have a chance to talk to him about it last night."

" He is saved."

" Peggy, I have guessed at a devilish strange thing. It is this El Cantor?"

" Yes."

" You sold yourself to him?"

" Hugh, he wouldn't have me, at the last minute."

" Why, Peggy, no wonder. We were outside the doors making it too hot for him!"

" No, no!"

She raised her hand to stop him.

" But what else?" he asked.

" Nothing could have stopped him if he had wanted to do it. I know nothing could have stopped him!"

The smile of Hugh Nichols was wan.

" You'll make him out another Napoleon," he said.

" Do you know," said the girl slowly, " that I almost feel that way about him—as though there were a fate working in him."

" Nonsense, Peggy! You've had too much excitement lately. There is no fate in that cunning rascal."

" Can you explain, then, why the ' rascal ' has thrown away sixty-five thousand dollars?"

" Ah? Unsecured?"

" Not a penny of security, except the honor of my father."

" An ample bond even for a thief," said Hugh Nichols.

" Not among bankers, when we wanted help. No, Hugh, there is something strange about him—something more than meets the eye."

" You are afraid of him?"

" Fear? Well, I suppose that I am."

They sat beside the window, he feeling that he had been pushed away from her by their few moments of conversation.

" And what will he do now?" asked Nichols.

" I have less idea than you have."

" I have a very clear one. He will use the first opportunity to hound you into a marriage, claiming your promise."

" He surrendered that claim."

" When he was afraid that the rope would be around his neck the next moment."

" Hugh, you are unjust to him."

" My dear Peggy, you are interested in that rascal. On my honor, you are!"

" I?"

Her laughter grew weak and then broke sharply off. She found herself staring at Nichols.

" Do you think so?" she asked. " I don't know, really."

Poor Nichols gaped.

" Good gad, Peggy," said he, " you are not meaning that I guessed seriously right?"

" I don't know what I'm meaning, except that my head swims. I can't understand him, Hugh."

" But, Peggy, to think seriously of such a —a fellow of—of wild reputation— By Heavens, Peggy, you don't mean that you are seriously fond of him?"

" I never put that question to myself until this moment, Hugh."

" But the answer has to be only one thing—that of course such a supposition is perfectly absurd. Say that, Peggy. Otherwise, I'll lose my mind. Because—"

She could see by the brightness of his eyes what was coming, he was so picked up and carried away by his own emotion. She tried to stop him by raising her hand.

But he shook his head as though to brush aside her protest.

" Because I've come down here with a heart on fire with very high hopes, Peggy. I've come down here trusting that you would not have called on me for help unless you thought kindly of me—trusting, Peggy, that I might dare to tell you something which has been in me for a long time—that I love you, Peggy!"

She had twisted her hands together and watched him with a look of regretful wistfulness.

"I'm so sorry that it came out, Hugh," said she.

"Is it such a hopeless case?"

"I can say a thousand fine things of you. But not the one thing you want to hear."

"Peggy, will you tell me one thing?"

"Anything I can that you can ask, of course."

"Before that wild affair of last night—well, to put it in another way. At this time yesterday, would you have been more open to persuasion than you are now?"

"I hardly know what you mean?"

"If I had asked you to marry me yesterday at this time—"

"I would have told you that I was under a bond to another man."

"And if that bond had not existed."

She fell into thought.

"I don't know. I think perhaps I should have."

He stood up.

"Then it was what happened last night that changed you. This fellow El Cantor—Jingle-Bells, whatever his name may be—"

She flushed, at this.

"His name is John Albert."

"Are you sure of that?"

She grew still more red, but could not make any other answer. For, in her heart of hearts, she knew that she was not sure.

"At any rate," said Hugh Nichols, "we'll find a way to remove him from the scene. Peggy, you're not the type that becomes infatuated easily. And that's why I tremble!"

She cried at him. "You really talk as though I'd throw myself at him! Hugh, how can you speak of me in such a way?"

"I'm sorry," he said gloomily. "But I begin to see what a devilish thing the whole tangle is! And it makes me heartsick!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SAGA OF LITTLE SAMUEL.

THERE was no rest that day for the sheriff. While Gloryville was in a swirl with the happenings which had focused on the parsonage, there was other trouble in the air, trouble of a far more dreadful significance. And that was the slaying of old Martin Hendon, a good man and a well-known citizen who had retired from ranching only the year before and was a resident of Gloryville—almost its richest man.

There was no harm in Mart Hendon. There was no pride in his money, no vainglory. He was simply a gentle, companionable old fellow of nearly seventy, as unpretending as a child. And this was the man who was found dead in his house.

He had gone out to find the cause of the riot at the parsonage, it appeared, and while he was gone the thieves had broken in. They obtained little for their trouble except a few articles of silver. In the midst of their work, old Hendon returned and fairly blundered upon them.

He was not armed. That made the hideousness of the crime all the more appalling. Indeed, he had not carried a gun for many years, but the two had knocked him down, tied him hand and foot, and finally—perhaps maddened by the influence of some whisky which was among their loot—they had brained him with the back of an ax. Such was the tale which took the worthy sheriff out on the road for five hours of fierce riding as he combed the countryside.

For the two murderers were known. One was a tall, long striding fellow, according to the footprints; the other was short, and had remarkably small feet. And Mrs. Hendon could testify that a tall man and a short one, traveling together, had called at Hendon's house to try to persuade him to give them work on his ranch. He had refused merely because he was in need of no cowpunchers. But they had left in a fury.

The sheriff came back fairly exhausted and unsuccessful. And the next thing on his programme was not rest, but an interview with big Sam. He took the negro into his office with irons on his hands and feet.

"Now, Sam," said he, "I'm going to make a bargain with you and yo're gonna take it. Yo're gonna give me enough information to put El Cantor in jail for his life, and I'm gonna see that you go free."

"Could you do that?" asked Little Samuel, sighing as he thought of the iron bars which walled his cell around, and the hard little cot.

"I could do that. I could fix things up with the district attorney plumb easy. Him and me are after the big crooks, not the little ones."

"I got to wait and take my chance," said Little Samuel lugubriously. And there he stuck. The fear of the prison bars was not half so great as his dread of El Cantor's vengeance in case of betrayal. And the sheriff, after taking the prisoner back, found none other than Margaret Swain at the door of the building.

"I want to see Little Samuel," said she.

To the sheriff such a request, from such a lady, was a command. He put the door wide, conducted her to the cell adjoining that of Little Samuel, and left her there to talk with him through the bars.

"All I'm askin'," grinned Walter Long, "is that you'll not pass him in a file or a steel saw."

As for Little Samuel, he could not get over gaping at his beautiful visitor, and certain pangs of a guilty conscience shot through and through the heart of the negro. Her first words put all these doubts to rest.

"Samuel," she began, "I have come to find out what I can do for your comfort. I want to help your master, and I want to help you. Tell me what you want."

"A mighty smart lawyer, ma'am," Little Samuel replied. "That's what I need the most of; one of them fast talkin' gents that could fool twelve men if they was listenin' to him all at once."

She could not help smiling.

"I have spoken to Thomas Cardiff. He is a young lawyer," she said, "but he's a very capable one. He'll handle your case well, I know, and do for you everything that could be expected."

"Lady," said Little Samuel, "they ain't no way how I can tell you the gratitude—"

"Hush," the girl interrupted. "You don't have to say such things. But what I wish to know above all is, are you going to remain true to your master, or are you going to inform against him, Samuel?"

He scratched his head and stared at her, as if uncertain what answer would please her.

"Or," she added, "*is* there anything against him?"

Little Samuel grinned.

"Not more'n enough, ma'am," said he, "to put about a regiment in jail for the rest of their lives."

"Has he been so terrible?" sighed the girl.

Little Samuel observed with an acute eye that she was not altogether unsympathetic toward his master; so he replied: "I dunno that I'd call him more'n sort of active, ma'am."

"Active?" smiled the girl. "Active in breaking laws, you mean?"

"Look here, ma'am," said Little Samuel, "was you ever a little girl with freckles on your nose?"

"Why—" she began, and then laughed as she answered: "Of course I was, Samuel."

"What sort of cherries tasted the best—them that was in your own back yard, or them across the way in the old orchard, where the gent that owned it kept a double-barreled shotgun loaded with rock salt, and kept a couple of dogs that wouldn't think nothin' of eatin' folks alive? Which cherries was the dog-gone best-tastin' ones?"

She chuckled, nodding at him with her bright, understanding eyes.

"The stolen cherries, of course, Samuel."

"Well, lady, suppose that you was the best tree climber in the county, and that you could run so dog-gone fast that the dog couldn't catch you, would you be spendin' much time in your own orchard, or would you be visitin' around with the other folks pretty regular when they wasn't expectin' you or invitin' you?"

"I understand," sighed she; "but after all he's no longer a boy. There is a time when people must grow up, Samuel!"

"I dunno," said Samuel, "that I ever met up with a gent that was worth his salt that wasn't tolerable young in somethin' or other, no matter how much he might be growed up in others."

"And in what, Samuel, is your master grown up?"

"For keepin' his word clean bright—and it ain't never been even suspected—and for standin' up to his promises, which ain't never been broke—and for fearin'

nothing at all. He's growed up in all them ways, ma'am."

"But to settle down to a man's work—"

"I dunno that he's ever seen a job hard enough to look like work to him!"

She gasped. "Do you mean that, Samuel?"

"Doin' hard things is his idea of a game," said he. "Might you be able to guess how I come to meet up with him?"

"Of course I've never heard."

"Well, lady, I hate mighty bad to get you down on me, but, startin' a few years back, I was sort of youngish like."

"I suppose that you were," smiled the girl.

"And I was feelin' my oats, you might say. Well, ma'am, me bein' sort of heavy in the foot and big in the hand, when I got to friskin' it busted up the furniture and stove in the floors pretty general. Got so's folks didn't want to have me around none too much. Then they was trouble, and pretty soon they was a little argument.

"They was eight Louisiana bucks that jumped me in a dark alley. I piled them niggers right up like cord wood and I walked on. But they was sort of marked up a little. It was them that started the trouble. It was me that got the worst of it from the law. They come and arrested me and shoved me into a jail and give me nothin' but pone and water to live by and made me sleep mighty hard on a dog-gone floor.

"So I up and bashed out the side of the jail and walked off. They hunted me with hounds. I lost them there hounds in a swamp, and then I started out and begun hittin' back.

"Well, lady, after that they was considerable excitement around them parts. I kept worryin' them, and they kept worryin' me. Well, sir, they kept on huntin' me with hounds, and they kept on chasin' me with guns, but still I kept clear of 'em. They begun offerin' rewards for me.

"When folks didn't have nothin' else to do, they'd just get together and come down to the marshes to hunt poor Little Samuel. It was a hard life, lady; but they couldn't catch me. A lot of men made so much noise and moved so slow that I could keep away from 'em.

"And when just a few men got to goin' fast down my trail and met up with me—most usual they wished that they hadn't had that much luck."

His eyes rolled, glistening with the joyous recollection. And he passed the tip of a fiery red tongue across his purple lips. He looked, for the moment, like a boyish devil, immensely overgrown.

"And you were never taken, Samuel?"

"Well, lady, along come a young gent one day, and hears about all what had happened down there by the swamp. He didn't get no guides to help him. He didn't get no friends and hard fighters to come along with him.

"He didn't take along no scentin' dogs nor no huntin' and fightin' dogs. He didn't take along no heavy pack of grub. He didn't even take along no rifle. No, lady, he took along some salt and a revolver and a huntin' knife.

"He didn't ask no questions. He just sat down and lived in that there marsh for a week, until he got plumb used to its ways and its smells and the snakes and the mud and the jungles. When he was plumb used to it and had got his bearin's and knew where north lay even in the middle of the night, then he come sashayin' out to find me.

"He found me all by himself, right enough. Them things that follered after him and me met the first time ain't the sort that the lady could hear without gettin' sort of sick. Anyway, I figgered that I could handle anybody that ever lived when I was just fightin' 'em man to man. But this here gent, he wasn't no man. He was a lightning flash. He busted all over me. When he got through I wasn't particular worth lookin' at. And this stranger, he set down and spent a whole month patchin' me up and makin' me look like something—and polishin' himself off, too, y' understand. Well, sir, when that there month was finished up I figgered that I had a master made to order for me."

"You had learned to love him?" murmured the girl, smiling in her admiration of these terrible ways of men.

"Love him?" growled Little Samuel. "Nope, but I figgered that he was the one gent in the world that could teach me the sort of things that I mostly wanted to know, and that he was the sort of a gent that could take care of me when I needed care-takin'. Y' understand?

"Well, before I was able to walk, he goes back to the town. He says to 'em: 'Friends, if you was sure that this here nigger would never come back and bother you none, would you agree to wipe off all of the charges ag'in' him? Would you turn him loose and let him go, and never try to get him again, if he was to promise to leave these here parts and never to come back?'

"They figgered this all over, and they decided that they'd have one last try to catch me. So they done their mighty best, but it wasn't good enough, because my boss was there takin' care of me and lead-in' the dogs off on the wrong trails. Pretty soon they give it up. And that very night my boss he sneaked down into town and he pretty near wrecked the place. He pretty near wrecked it, but he left my trade mark behind him, so's everybody would think that I'd done it.

"After that he went to see 'em again, and they was glad enough to make the bargain. They was sick of me and my ways, they said, and they'd drop everything they had ag'in' me if I'd promise to clear out of there. Which I done. And the name of that boss of mine, lady, I guess you know him already—that's El Cantor!"

He continued: "That's why I say that he ain't never met nothin' that was big enough to really bother him none. He can't lose, and he knows it. He can't fail; it ain't in him to. Me? I was nothin' to him, and neither was the others."

"But what is he aiming toward, Samuel? What's his goal in life, or has he any?"

"Miss Swain," said the black man solemnly, "I dunno that he quite understands himself; but I've always figgered that he'd keep on smashin' and breakin' until he got into some sort of trouble that was bigger than he was, and that then he'd stop—and not till then!"

"Perhaps you are right—perhaps! And yet here he has left you in jail. Do you still have faith in him?"

"Lady, this ain't no jail to him. When he wants to get me out of it, he'll rip it in two and pick me out safe and sound to go along with him. You dunno what sort of a man this here El Cantor might be!"

"But are you sure that you will see him?"

"Plumb certain to hear from him pronto."

"Then, when you have an opportunity, let him know that I wish to see him. Do you understand, Samuel? I wish to see him as soon as possible. But as for your escape—isn't it safer in the long run to stand your trial—"

"That's the old-fashioned way," grinned Little Samuel. "And it don't fit El Cantor no ways at all. I'll take my chances with him, lady."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE JUNGLE BREED.

THERE were five men by the fire in the "jungle"; there was one man in the highest tip of the great tree which rose above this haven of the tramps. He kept good lookout in the moonlight for the approach of any strangers of a formidable respectability in their appearance. For these were stirring and unhappy times with the hoboes.

The good men of Gloryville, enraged by the murder of poor old Mart Hendon at the hands of vagabonds, were quartering the countryside; and when they found a loafer they thought nothing of riding him on a rail and then rolling him in a coating of tar and strewing him with feathers.

People who do not know think that the shame is the only punishment in this; but others, more wise, understand what trouble it needs to remove the tar from even one spot on a finger. So, the word of the reign of terror having gone forth, this small company was gathered here. It had been herded in from varying directions.

They met here for a brief rest, the cook-

ing of an immense pot of slumgullion, and after a sleep of two or three hours they would be off again, each hunting the horizon, each in dread of those terrible riders from Gloryville.

The stew had been eaten, the tramps were reposing right and left, when the lookout gave a warning cry. By the time he reached the ground the others had rolled up their belongings, or pocketed them, and were ready to go. The lookout announced only one rider approaching. And at this there was a general groan of disgust. What was one man to be feared?

"He might have a whole slough of others behind him," suggested the lookout.

"And again, he might not. We'll lay for this bloke. Jerry—here, you sit here by the fire. The rest of us 'll sneak back in the bushes and wait. When he comes up, give him your lip, old kid. And if he gets rough we'll swarm all over him."

"That's pretty hard on the rest of you, ain't it?" suggested the unwilling Jerry. "Here's Steve Grenda. He ain't so big that he's gonna get into trouble with most folks. He's got a better chance, too, of gettin' away. Steve, will you take the job?"

Steve, it appeared, was not altogether unwilling. He sat down by the fire, hugging his knees and smoking a pipe—a little man with a ragged-rimmed derby on his head and a pair of undersized shoes upon his extremely small feet. In the meantime his companions vanished, and they were hardly out of sight before the stranger appeared, riding right through the brush and coming into the flickering circle of the firelight.

"Well, partner?" he hailed.

Steve shrugged his shoulders and grunted; he offered no further greeting. So the stranger looked calmly around him and allowed his horse to wander closer to the fire. It stretched out its head toward the flames like a curious child. It was a magnificent red bay with a skin that glistened as if oiled in the firelight.

"You are having a peaceful time," said El Cantor with perfect calmness. "Why have your friends left you?"

"Friends?" echoed Steve Grenda.

The rider swept his hand toward the ground. In fact, the depressions which many footfalls had left were all the more visible because the slant firelight, striking across them, filled them with shadow.

"Well?" grunted Steve, making no concessions even to this evidence.

"The size of your feet, man," said El Cantor with a contemptuous impatience. "The size of your feet! They would not fit in nine-tenths of those clodhopper trails."

"Who in hell may you be to ask?" rumbled Steve, bristling like the bull terrier that he was.

"A man with his eyes in his head," returned El Cantor. "Besides, your feet are extraordinarily small—"

This thought, as he voiced it aloud, seemed to strike him so forcibly that he started in the saddle and looked fixedly down to the little man by the fire. The latter glowered savagely back to him.

"Why, damn you," said he—"leave my feet be!"

The rider merely smiled again.

"You are a foolish fellow," he declared, "to rattle along like that. You do yourself a great deal of harm."

"With saps like you," said Steve furiously, "I dunno that I give a damn how I stand."

"You don't," observed the other, "and that's the pity of it. Because we're the only ones who can help you."

"Help me?"

"Yes."

"Help me from what?"

"Hanging," said El Cantor.

The eyes of the little man by the fire glinted back and forth, as a dog's eyes flash when it glimpses two approaching. And his stubby fist slipped back to his hip pocket.

"Now, you slick-faced dick, you" he whined in a muted fury, "what in hell are you after?"

"You talk like a jackass, man," said El Cantor. "If I were a detective, would I come up to you like this when you are surrounded by your friends, the gunmen, in the bushes yonder?"

Steve Grenda stood up.

"I dunno," he declared thoughtfully. "I dunno about this line of talk. You got a fast-workin' tongue. But I dunno about trusting you too far. It ain't good sense."

"Very well," El Cantor remarked. "But what do you think has brought me here?"

"Nothin' but accident, bo!"

El Cantor smiled. "A lucky accident," said he.

"Lucky for what?"

"For me, you fool!"

With that he dropped the reins across the neck of the red bay, and while a tap of his heel sent Monsieur le Duc flying away at a round gallop, El Cantor leaned sidewise from the saddle like a swooping hawk.

His lean, powerful arms gripped about Steve Grenda, and that worthy was snatched up before the rider in a trice.

As for the watchers, they had time to utter one yell of astonishment. But when they raised their guns to fire they hesitated. There was more chance of killing Steve with their bullets than there was of dropping the rider. Before they could make up their minds El Cantor and the horse and the captive were across the thicket into the open country beyond.

Steve Grenda made a brief fight and a bitter one until a hand of steel caught a wrist and doubled his arm behind his back. Then, with the bone threatening to snap at every instant, he was helpless.

"What are you drivin' at?" he snarled. But the captor made no reply. His cruel, contemptuous face did not alter—not a spoken syllable was returned to Steve. But presently he was secured with both hands bound behind his back, and in this fashion he was forced to run forward in front of the horseman, run until his breath was failing him.

So they came over the hill into full view of Gloryville by night. At that sight Grenda stopped with a shout of despair. He turned to fling himself at the other, even with his bound hands. But he was struck down into senselessness, and when he wakened again he lay bound hand and foot and gagged in a shrouding darkness among shrubs; but where he was he could not tell, for he was unable to move. And the gag which closed his throat was nearly strangling him.

But that place which he lay in was none other than the back yard of the house of Sheriff Walter Long; and in the harness shed the weary sheriff, too harassed with worries to sleep, was busily patching a broken girth. He looked up from that work with his needle poised and observed before him none other than the much-wanted Jingle-Bells, with a long revolver hanging from his hand.

The gun was not leveled upon the sheriff, as though the mere show of it should be enough to a sensible man. The sheriff appreciated keenly this tribute to his intelligence, but he glowered blackly upon the other.

"Jingle-Bells," said he, "damn me if you ain't up to more deviltry! What is it now?"

"I am about to perform an act of charity."

"Of which?"

"Charity."

"To what, might I ask?"

"To you, sheriff."

"I got to be patient," said the sheriff, "while you got the drop on me. But what might you mean?"

"I am about to make a trade with you. For the sake of the freedom of Little Samuel, I'll turn over to you a *bona-fide* murderer—a real rare one, sheriff."

"Yo're talkin' crazy," said the sheriff. "What murderer?"

"What's the one you most want just now?"

"Not one—I want the bloody pair that slaughtered good old Mart Hendon. I want them bad, too!"

"Very well, sheriff—I have one of the men!"

"What?"

"Look at this!"

He tossed a half dozen silver spoons down before the sheriff.

"This stuff was in his pocket. There's an 'H' on them, as you see."

"As I see? God bless me, ain't I ate with 'em many and many a time? Oh, Jingle-

Bells, bring me to the gent that you got these here from, and you can have ten niggers in exchange!

"But," he added, pausing, "how'll we make the exchange? Am I gonna go to the jail and bring out Little Samuel, while you stay back here with your man? No, no, Jingle-Bells—that's too slim. I'd never see any of the three of you again."

"You may take your time, sheriff, and do it in your own way. I'll wait here until you have taken the murderer in."

"You'll wait here, Jingle-Bells, and take a chance on me sneakin' back with a couple of hands to help me—"

"My dear sheriff," smiled El Cantor, "you are absurd. Of course I know you are a man of honor!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A CHANGE OF SCENE.

THEY sat on opposite sides of the library table at the Swain house like two generals laying forth a plan of campaign. And if Henry Swain were serious, Hugh Nichols was despairing.

"You've overrated what she's told you," declared the father. "You've far overrated the importance of what she has said, Hugh. Because she's extremely outspoken, and is sure to say a little bit more than is in her mind.

"Mr. Swain," said the younger man, "I have tried to think that. But it's something more than what she's said. When she speaks of this fellow John Albert, as he calls himself, there's a change in her voice and a change in her eye. Those things have a meaning. She may be outspoken, but she has never been emotional."

Swain pondered for a moment. "Then tell me," he inquired, "how far you think that the thing might go."

"I think I know," big Hugh Nichols replied. "It will go to a marriage. Particularly if she's opposed by us. One can't say a word against this El Cantor. She fires up at once and begins to defend him. I've noticed that."

"Marriage!" breathed Swain. "Marriage to an infernal adventurer, a nameless rascal, an outlawed thief and ruffian, a gun fighter, a notorious scoundrel like that? I tell you, Hugh, I'd far rather that the ranch had been lost and that my ruin had taken us both out of this section of the country."

"What does the section matter to him?" asked Nichols despondently. "I've thought of that. I've thought of persuading her to leave this district for a time. But I tell you, Mr. Swain, the fellow would follow us. He would be away after you like a bloodhound."

"Do you think so?"

"I know so, Mr. Swain. There's that much devil in him. The higher you build the wall the surer he is to climb it!"

"But the law is on him, Nichols. His departure from the country can be barred."

"Can it, though?"

"Certainly!"

"But what can be held against him? What that is serious, I mean?"

"What? Why, man, the whole world knows that he's an outlawed—"

"But for what?"

"Why, for kidnaping you, for one thing."

"He did me no harm. And, after all, I'd be ashamed to appear in such a case. It would make me a laughing stock at home."

"But there are other things. He shot down two of my men—"

"In a fair fight. I think you'd find it hard to get a conviction from a western jury on such a matter. They won't jail one man for beating two others in a fair fight, particularly where neither wound was mortal?"

"But the scene at the parson's house—"

"After all, Mr. Swain, what did that really amount to? Your daughter had agreed—"

"Had been bribed—bought, Hugh."

"Would the law feel that? She had agreed to marry him. When he came to marry her, according to the agreement, he was set upon by armed men. That wouldn't look particularly honorable for our side of the case!"

"In the name of Heaven, do you mean to say that if he stands his trial—"

"Just now, while feeling is high about

the affair, he might have trouble. But in a few months, there won't be a shadow to raise against him. Already people are beginning to speak favorably of him because he caught one of the two devils who murdered old Mr. Hendon. This fellow Grenda has confessed and now they're apt to get the second man."

"I've heard that. And it convinces me that there's only one way out of the mess—and that's to take my girl away from this place and keep her away until the ridiculous romance is well out of her head!"

"Very well, sir. It sounds like the only hope. But I warn you that El Cantor will make a desperate effort to follow you."

"The law will help to keep him back. With that handicap I may win. And the first real change of scene may bring my girl to her senses. It is a sort of hypnotism, at the best!"

He tried to persuade Hugh Nichols to go with them, but the young man refused.

"I've given up all my own hope," he told the rancher.

"I've never seen her so friendly to you," urged Swain. "She always refers to you as 'dear Hugh.' God bless me, man, what better could you have?"

"I'd rather have her hate me. Hate is nearer to love than friendship is—a very great deal. And she's too friendly with me now. Love implies a little touch of mystery. And there's no mystery about me. Peggy has discovered it—and there you are! It will never come out well for me. Never. She has come to know me too well. You never hear of well-acquainted people actually falling in love."

There he stuck, and the very next day said his farewell and started back to New York. He did not go far in advance of the others, however. That same day, Mr. Swain informed his daughter that he had received intelligence from his sister who lived in south Italy telling him that her affairs were in a serious crisis and that he must go to her at once.

And Margaret Swain, listening to this grave story, waited for a moment, watching her father with quietly amused eyes, plainly telling him in her silence that she well understood what was in his mind.

But she consented. She asked for three days. He gave her one. And, for twenty-four hours, he saw her anxiety increasing. He well knew what it meant. She was waiting for the coming of El Cantor.

Yet that time wore away—a time of suspense to the rancher. Then they stepped into the buckboard which carried them to Cranton, and all the way across the dusty road her eyes were strained toward the horizon, as if she expected him to come out upon them with a rush at any moment.

Still he did not come. Cranton loomed in sight. They stood upon the station platform at last. The train rumbled in. And now they were climbing up the steps—now they were in their seats. Still the girl held tense with suffering eyes, but when the engine lurched ahead and then the long rumble of the starting train began, her nerves snapped and she broke into silent weeping.

It was a painful thing for Henry Swain to watch, but he felt that the first and the longest step to her salvation had been taken.

In four days they stood on the deck of a great liner which was rushing across the Atlantic. And every knot that stretched behind them was a comfort to Henry Swain. They passed between the Pillars of Hercules. They swept on south until at last they docked in the colorful, noisy port of Naples.

But though Margaret smiled and strove to put on a cheerful pretense, she could not deceive her father. She was pale, and she had passed out of her girlhood in the last fortnight. She was already on the verge of full womanhood.

Their baggage was to follow them on the train. They themselves were picked up by Aunt Elizabeth's automobile, long and low and powerful, and wafted southward through the rolling hills and over the white roads.

"Peggy," said her father suddenly, giving way to the impulse which had been making a lump in his throat for the last two weeks, "for God's sake drop him from your mind. He is not worth a minute of your thought!"

He could feel her shudder under his touch, but there was no other response.

And, an hour later, they were in the house of Aunt Elizabeth. She had been informed as to what she should say about her "financial crisis," by a long letter detailing the facts as they stood in the far West concerning El Cantor, and she was ready to play her part.

But, first of all, she gave them tea under the pergola which stood on the edge of the cliff, with sharply terraced gardens dropping toward the blue sea. It was a tiny harbor with a rocky island at its mouth and fishers' little boats heeling over before the wind. At the bottom of the cliff was the town, a ragged strip of squalor and of color.

And while Peggy Swain forgot herself long enough to smile at the beauty of the place and then ran down to investigate a strip of enormous hollyhocks, her aunt leaned to her brother.

"This is a very bad case," said she.

"How do you mean?" he asked. "How can you tell?"

"Love," the maiden aunt replied, "is like steam. If it is let off in talk—all very well. But when it isn't turned into words—my dear brother, it's as serious as a disease. How are we to cure the child?"

"Have you no handsome counts to produce, Elizabeth? Have you sat here with your hands folded ever since I wrote to you that we were coming?"

"I have plenty of them—if she will but look. But for my part, I'd rather have her married to an American outlaw. Well, well, dear brother, every man to his own taste!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SMOOTH SAILING.

SHE would *not* look. So much was plain after three weeks of entertainments.

"Let her have some solitude," Aunt Elizabeth suggested then, and straightway took them out for a sail on her own little yacht.

She herself had the helm. There were two red-shirted fishermen glad to take a day's work for the liberal pay of the lady, and so they slid smoothly down the bay with the wind in the belly on the leg of mutton sail. They rounded the island at the mouth of the harbor by mid-morning.

The sea beyond was smooth as glass—certainly there could be no danger here! And yonder were the fishing craft making out—or already far away, hull down against the blue horizon—little winking bits of sail.

So Aunt Elizabeth, instead of putting straight into one of the coves of the island, put straight out for sea. At this, her brother grew anxious.

"This devilish wind is all very well for running out," said he. "But how about coming home again?"

"Why, my dear," his sister explained, "don't you think that we can go into the wind with this boat? Tush! It eats into it like a full-rigged ship—no, better, far better. I'll show you."

So saying, she made a starboard tack that ran her aslant through the mouth of the harbor. They left the foaming teeth of a rock ridge twenty feet away as they slid through the little harbor mouth.

"By heavens, Elizabeth," cried her brother. "Don't do that again! This is worse than a bucking horse on the edge of a cliff. I can't swim, you know!"

She merely smiled at him, and Margaret, from the bows where she was watching the trembling of the wind in the sail and listening to the rush of the water, laughed for the first time since they left home.

"Go on, then," said Henry Swain to his sister. "It seems to be putting some spirit in Peggy. You may sail to the devil and back if you can accomplish that! But have you pirates in these days and these waters?"

He pointed back to an odd craft with a wide shell of a hull that skimmed across the water blown along by a great, clumsy-looking rectangular sail. But despite its queer appearance, the craft was a notable sailer. It was gaining on Elizabeth Swain's little yacht at every moment.

"That looks like a boat out of an Egyptian tomb," said Elizabeth. "However, they get all manner of craft in these waters. They come across from the African coast—the same sort of craft that they have been using for centuries, you know. But why piratical, if you please?"

"Because the rascal is following us."

"Nonsense! He's simply making out to sea."

"Tack again, and we'll see."

"Very well, then."

She shouted to Peggy to crouch beneath the swing of the boom, then spun her helm, and came about and rocked away on the port tack. The wind freshened. The little craft began to dip her nose through the wave-tops and cast back stinging little volleys of spray.

"Look!" cried Swain, "by the Lord, the rascal is coming straight after us!"

His sister stared aft with a frown. Yonder, in fact, came the queer stranger, overhauling them by leaps and bounds.

"He's playing tag with us, that's all," she decided in a peremptory tone which showed that she didn't like it. "The rascal sees that he has the foot of us and he's running around showing off. See him come!"

As the stranger filled on the port tack and gathered way, he began to eat up the space between them rapidly enough, to be sure.

"I don't like it!" confessed Swain.

"You're really silly, Henry," Aunt Elizabeth said in reproof. "Of course this harbor is as safe as my drawing-room floor! And as for pirates—why, you can see for yourself that there are only two men on that craft!"

Now that it was so near, they could make out, in fact, that there was only the man at the helm who seemed a cunning steersman, and a single sailor of gigantic size to work the ropes.

"He must be a Hercules, that fellow," their hostess said, "or he could never handle that sail single handed. Isn't he a negro, Henry? The sun is in my eyes, and I can't make him out very clearly."

"Negro?" cried her brother. "Negro? Good God, Elizabeth!"

"What's the matter now? Henry, you've actually turned hysterical!"

"A negro! He *is* a negro!"

"And what of that?"

"Elizabeth, I've told you about Little Samuel."

At this she started. And as she looked back to her brother she gasped: "Do you really think—"

"Look at Peggy!"

She was standing up straight, her face lifted and her eyes ablaze with joy as she looked back to the stranger.

"She knows!" said Henry Swain. "You can see it in her face."

"How could he come?"

"Don't ask me how. Elizabeth, put about and run back for the harbor."

"Are you actually afraid?"

"I tell you, my dear, that you don't know that young demon. There is nothing past him! Here's Peggy coming aft to us to see them better. The devil is in it!"

The stranger had now advanced so close that it was easy to make out every line in her and the features of the two men who composed her crew, and there was no doubt remaining. Yonder was the huge bulk of Little Samuel, singing. And what was he singing?

A song in praise of El Cantor!

And at the helm was El Cantor himself, laughing, now, and waving his hat to them in a broad circle.

"Go about, Elizabeth!" cried Henry Swain.

She put her helm over without a word, and, as the boom swung across, the yacht lost headway and hung poised, fighting to gain way once more. At the same time the pursuer luffed and only the original headway wafted the broad-bottomed boat along. Even so, she came swiftly on. Now Little Samuel was at the helm, and El Cantor stood at the rail.

"Mr. Swain," he cried, "will you permit me to call at sea, so to speak?"

"The devil fly away with him," said Elizabeth Swain. "He's a handsome youngster. No wonder he turned Peggy's head. What will you do, Henry?"

He put his answer to her into his answer to the outlaw. For, leaping up, he cried: "Young man, bear off from us. Do you hear? And if—"

El Cantor waved a hand as though to brush the other out of his mental horizon.

"Peggy," he called, "will you come aboard with us for a spin out to sea and back?"

"You impertinent young fool!" thundered Henry Swain, "if you dare—"

"Henry!" cried his sister. "Stop her!"

He turned in time to see his daughter standing poised on the outer edge of the yacht as the little boat filled away on her new course, heeling far over and so lifting the girl high above the level of the water. At the same time the odd ship of El Cantor glided in under the lee of their craft and there was El Cantor back at the wheel, handling it like a sensitive horse, while big Samuel stood with legs braced far apart.

"Jump, Peggy!" cried El Cantor.

"Peggy, are you mad?" shouted her father, leaping for her.

But she was already in the air. Her leap and an upward fling of the yacht had pitched her high, and now she rushed down straight into the arms of Little Samuel.

He received her as lightly as a feather, swung her around, and there she crouched low on the deck with an arm flung up across her face, as if to cover it from the scorn and the rage of her father.

At the same time, the wide-bottomed boat of El Cantor, its sail filling with the wind again, leaped away across the water, and the yacht whipped off on the opposite tack.

"I'll come about after them!" cried Elizabeth Swain.

"Hold your course," said her brother bitterly. "He has her at last. It would take a greater power than mine to take her from him again!"

THE END

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AN HONEST MAN

A MERRY little maiden stopped
My vehicle one day
And begged a ride to Rutherford,
For I was on the way.
She was as sweet as honey,
And her face was like the rose,
As she offered me an apple
And a nickel. "I suppose
I'll have to take you, lassie, but
'Twill cost you more than this";
So I charged her in addition
Just one tiny, weeny kiss.

My ancient steed grew balky
Ere I'd gone a single mile;
I could not budge the animal
With punishment or guile;
The little lass grew nervous,
She would no longer wait,
Lest she be late at school and thus
Incur some awful fate;
So feeling very sorry for
The merry little miss,
I gave her back her apple
And her nickel and her kiss.

Frank Lintaber.

World-Beaters

By THOMAS THURSDAY

THERE'S a boob born every minute! The above contribution to art and literature was dashed off by a rising young chap, named Phineas Taylor Barnum, who prowled around this earth years ago passing out amusement and apple-sauce by the bushel. At about the same time this jovial genius also dipped his pen in some elderberry juice and added the following olio to the aforementioned gem:

The American people like to be fooled!

Millions of gentle and ungentle folks are still inclined to believe that Professor Barnum was inspired to write these wisecracks by a close association with Mr. and Mrs. General Public. Speaking of the above ginspirations, as we are going to do, you may perish, kill and otherwise annihilate the illusion! Monsieur Barnum did *not* get his ideas from studying the dear and expensive public. He got 'em *any*where, from close scrutiny of his fellow showmen, and if that's wrong then Babe Ruth never used a baseball bat!

For our text to-day, and positive proof of the above raving, let us take Joe Sweeney, Clem Clinker, and the party of the third part, the same being yours very truly. If you have a half hour to spare, stick around and maybe we'll have a little sport and fun. There was plenty of amusement, but at this moment *I'm* just beginning to see it!

At the time this act opens the World of Joy Carnival had closed the season at the urgent request of a bevy of sheriffs, leaving me and Joe doing a Robinson Crusoe; in plain English, busted and stranded. The trick was originally booked for a solid twenty-six weeks but, owing to absentee business, it lasted for a mere fifteen, then took a nose dive into bankruptcy. Salaries had been paid in gilt-edged promises for the last two weeks and even the gilt wore off, giving me and Joseph a clear and macadamized road to the almshouse. Naturally, when the show "blew" it had to perform the stunt in a town with the tasty title of Goldstream, Kansas. Sitting on the post

office steps, meaning the town hall, the grocery, butchery, bakery, undertakery, etc., Joe tried his luck at a little deep thinking. Being one of the best side-show lecturers in America, also Coney Island—all of which he has a constant habit of admitting—thinking out schemes was a item he claimed to have a patent on.

"Doc," he says to me, "I never cared for farming, bricklaying, plumbing, or any other form of positive labor. Therefore, if we care to eat heavy and work light, le's start something before we get rusty. Er—how much jack have you got, if any?"

"Four dollars and two cents," I says. "The two cents represents a postage stamp."

"Great!" he enthuses. "The stamp will come in handy."

"How much have you got? I want to know."

"Subtract three dollars and ninety-seven cents from your wealth and the balance is mine. I don't think the income tax boys will bother me this season."

"Well, what's the idea? Go on with the plot, never mind the lecture."

Before replying, he takes out his Missouri meerschaum—meaning a corncob pipe—fills it with corn silk, and takes a few ruminative puffs.

"Over in Huckleberry County, at a slab called Duckout, a small motorized show is due to open next Monday. The name of this trick is no less than Pal Gaylor's Great United and Mammoth World's Best Combined Shows. That, you'll admit, is a mouthful, hey?"

"Three meals!" I admits. "The piffo who painted the signs must of got cramps in the arm and bean."

"You may keep quiet; also shut up. The bright idea is about to bust forth."

"Well, for the love of love, let it bust!" I snaps, getting impatient. "There's a freight blowing through this burg in about ten minutes and I was figuring that it wouldn't be complete without me as a added attraction."

"You may keep quiet; also shut up," he repeats. "And now, gimme that pencil. I wouldst do a little corresponding." Five minutes later, he submits the following specimen of nerve for my dazed eyes to read:

PAL GAYLOR,
Mgr., Great United, etc., and the rest, Shows,
Duckout, Huckleberry County, Kan.:

Gentlemen—Get a large tent ready and give us feature position on Midway. If you don't, you lose. Have greatest show on earth, Barnum and Bailey be blowed! Meantime, you may expect us to arrive via first gentlemen's freight that ducks through Duckout.

Thanks for listening.

Yours truly,
PROF. DR. JOSEPH SWEENEY, M. D.,
and Hypnotist, Etc.

"What's this supposed to be, a valentine?" I ask.

"That, my dear doc, is what I call a large portion of applied piffle," he replies. "How-the-so-ever, in order to get away with the stunt that we are about to commit, it will be necessary for me to take a medical course of four years in about four minutes. In my trunk I gotta a book with a name so big that I get scared each time I slant it. It's got all the high flooey-flooey medical langwidge in it, and I'll just take a nose dive through it and come up with some real dope. It tells all about hypnotism—how it comes from the hip, etc., and I can get up a lecture that will knock the yokels flatter than a bootlegger's alibi."

"When you find out what you're talking about, kindly tell me!" I begs.

"Sit down, custard face, and I'll let you in on the neat way we shall gather in a few hundred berries, none of which will be raspberries. Now, listen. The appetizing title of our get-rich-slick stunt may be called 'Buried Alive' or words to that defect. All we need to promote the act is a tent, a wooden box, with a sort of periscope sticking up at one end for the customers to gaze through, and a few eye-catching signs. You can do the ballyhoo stuff out front, call on the local newspaper editor, and spill him a panful of assorted fairy tales. The price of admission to our nightmare will be the small sum of twenty-five cents, from Monday to Friday. On Saturday, blow-off day, and the time we give the natives a thrill by digging up and reviving the hypnotized goopo, we shall charge all the traffic will stand, and a few cents extra.

Now that we misunderstand each other perfectly, I suggest that we duck into Duckout, Huckleberry County, Kansas."

"Duck away!" I says. "I think the climate further south will be better for me. Besides which, my mamma never reared no foolish children. S'long and good luck!" I start to edge away. Joe grabs me by the arm.

"Do you need any money or don't you?" he asks.

"Show me the showman who doesn't," I says.

"All right! Without you, I can't get away with the show. With you, we both gather important money. Suppose you let that sink in your rock formation."

We start for Duckout.

II.

EIGHT o'clock Sunday morning, we arrived at the merry village of Duckout, via fast and furious freight. At first glance the town looked like a home for veteran snails, and when me and Joe got one slant at the main street we thought it was a morgue. However, as most showmen know, all dead towns are far from being buried, and sometimes turn out to be as active as a one-armed paper hanger in a hurricane. In fact, Duckout proved to be the mints' gold supply, no fooling!

Reaching the show grounds Joe lost no time in popping in to see Mr. Pal Gaylor, owner and sole prop. of the Great United Mammoth, etc., Shows. Mr. Gaylor turns out to be a parboiled gent, one who had graduated from a Uncle Tom's Cabin mud-show outfit years ago to his present position as boss of a nifty motorized caravan.

"Sounds like pretty good bunk to me," admits Mr. Gaylor, after Joe had told him the proposition. "However, good bunk is so scarce that I'll give you grifters a chance. If you've got the nerve, you might get away with it. On the other hand, if you land in the cooler, don't mention my name. Go over to the boss canvas man and tell him to give you that tent I took away from the 'Plantation Show' last week. They flopped, and I chased 'em off the Midway. And if you don't make good, I'll give you the same chase. First in peace, first in war, yours truly, Pal Gaylor. Beat it!"

A snappy turtle, what?

"Guess I'm some promotion kid, hey?" pipes Joe, as we head for the lair of the boss canvasman. "We'll get the tent up right away, paint a few signs, then go and dig up some rube to hypnotize. Meantime, doc, you blow around and see the editor of the paper, if they have one, give him an earful of choice and fancy blah, and we'll be selling tickets Monday afternoon."

Well, to prune a long story, the tent turned out to be the trouts' bait, seating about two hundred odd customers. All seats, meaning hard planks on stilts, were orchestra, sold at gallery prices. We pitched the "top" in the dead center of the Midway, always the best money location on the lot, provided you got a boob-tickling show. Joe, being a unnatural born conversationalist, promotes some paint and a brush from the village blacksmith and commenced to daub out a set of yokel-yanking signs.

While he was thus engaged with the art work, I breezed around to see what could be done with the editor of the Duckout *Weekly Wow*. A few columns about our show wouldn't do any harm. However, try and get it! On the other hand, when in Rome, never do as the Romans do.

The pilot of the *Weekly Wow* turns out to be a beezark with side-wheeler whiskers; and when I got one look at his stern pan, meaning face, or map, I realized he had as much use for showmen as I have for three feet. As I entered his trap, he released one leg from the top of a rickety desk, and let it hit the floor with a bang. Without even looking up to see whether Jack Dempsey or the Prince of Wales was calling, he stretches the other leg over the desk and takes a few extry puffs of a pipe that Lord Nelson must of tossed overboard at the Battle of Trafalgar. Promptly I realized that Mr. Diplomacy was in order.

"Ahem!" I opens up, "am I addressing the editor of the famous *Weekly Wow?*" And I'll leave it to you, wasn't that a good line of prune juice?

"Mister," he drawls, "don't waste your time. I don't need any razors, check-protectors, undershirts, handy reference library

to the complete works of Barney Google, or the like."

And then they say the small town editors are a joke! Woof—that old bird was sharp enough to cut the edge of a razor-blade in half. I decide to take a chance on pulling a new stunt. In different words, I intend to place all my cards on the table and tell the truth!

"Mr. Editor," I begins, "you see before you a ordinary branch of the showman's tree. What I'm about to ask you to print is guaranteed to be grade-A bunk and pearly piffle. I know that that stamps me as the world's worst press agent. All right! Now then, another fathead and me are so far broke that even the next meal is doubtful. However, we've got a idea that we've got a idea to earn some innocent money, and I'm asking you to help us out with a little publicity. As I says before, it's all bunk! But there's two kinds of bunk. One is bunk bunk and the other is *interesting* bunk; in other woods, good copy! Meantime, kindly accept this cigar, light it up, and I'll unfold the plot. When I finish, if you don't like it, just toss me out the window, and let it go at that."

"Young man," he breaks in, "this is all like a dream to me. You admit that you're a showman and a press agent combined, and yet you stand before me and tell me that what you are about to say is bunk. Well!"

He gets up, grabs his old velour hat off the hook, and starts for the door.

"Come along, son," he says, "we'll trot around to Hank Kift's Restaurant and have a nip. You're such a positive novelty that I believe I'll give you a couple of columns. Walk faster, can't you? You act like you have rheumatism, or something."

I fell in soft, eh?

Over the coffee and cake I told Monsieur Editor all about our proposed exhibition of nerve. When I concluded, he says it will make darn live reading and that it will appear in the next issue, out the same day our shows opens. Then he pays for the refreshments, and if that *ever* happened to a press agent before, kindly page me! In a daze, I dash back to the lot and find Joe dabbing away at the signs.

"How'd you make out, doc?" he asks, looking up with a paint-smeared face. I told him that everything was all fixed for a pip of a write-up in the paper and that even the editor himself would be down to look us over.

"Great!" he beams. "Now all we need is some sap for a hypnotic subject. Go around town and promote some guy that looks so dumb he'd swap diamonds for pancakes. The dumber the better. Get one that looks woozy! The woozier, the easier it will be to handle him. By all means, get one that looks stupid. See?"

"I thought you was gonna dig up the subject?" I complains. "I promoted the editor, and that's a trick, ain't it?"

"Have I gotta leave this artistic work and go around town myself looking up a monkey? For the love of Barnum, hop to it, will you? I can't do everything!"

"All right," I says, "I'll bring back the fattest fathead in the burg!"

As it turned out, I selected the livest piffo in the State! Honest, he was a riot! But—we'll get to that farce later.

I headed for the post office with the idea of selecting a subject from the loungers. No village post office is complete without a flock of haystack philosophers. They toil not, neither do they win. They permit their wives to attend to such small matters as work.

As I entered, a group were settling the outcome of the next war, why Dempsey never reads Bedtime Stories, why Babe Ruth never paints his bats with mucilage, and one gent was holding forth on the correct solution of why potato bugs never bother orange blossoms. All very important stuff.

However, the flipper that held my undivided attention was squatting silently near a cracker box, grabbing one now and then, and inspecting the ceiling. He wore a checkerboard suit, with a Mah Jongg accent—whatever that is—while his hat looked like a Cincinnati cuspidor with a pink bow on the front. Right away I figured he was the applehead for the job. If ever a man looked dumb, and then dumber, he was the guy!

"Howdy?" I begins. "Are you very

busy just now?" He looks at me out of a set of shepherd dog eyes, coughs, chokes, then reaches for another cracker.

"Yeah," he says, and stops talking.

"What are you doing?" I goes on. "My eyesight is kinda bad."

"Sittin' down," he mumbles. "Guess you must be blind."

"Fine! You're just the man I want."

"For what—work?"

"Far from it!" I replies, sitting beside him. "You are about to be well paid for doing less than you're doing. Now you've got to *sit* down. Work for us and you can *lay* down. How about it?"

"Mister," he drawls," I been looking for a job like that all my life. Ah—how much do you pay?"

"I'll introduce you to Professor Dr. Sweeney, the world's greatest hypnotist. He'll talk about what you get—and what you don't get."

"All right. What did yer say I hadda do, hey?" he mumbles as we walk toward the show.

"Nothing!" I says, "simply nothing. Only you got to know how to do it."

"Haw!" he cackles. "They ain't nobuddy in this town that can do nothin' more ways than *I* can. If they is, he must be out in the cemetery. Ah—what kinda nothin' didja say I hadda do?"

"All you got to do is stand still, and let Professor Sweeney hypnotize you. Then you are supposed to be fast asleep, and are buried in the ground for a week. The folks will pay real money to see you, and that's where we all get some nice coin. Pretty soft, huh?"

"I may be dead, but they ain't nobuddy gonna bury me whilst I'm still kickin'!" After which, he starts to leave me flat. I grab him by the arm, and yank him back.

"You don't get the idea," I soothes. "You ain't really hypnotized, and you don't have to stay in the box, down in the ground for a week. You just stay there for a few hours every day, while the people are looking at you. When they blow out, you can come up and hang around the dressing tent until the next show. Of course you can't walk around the village, because that would give the stunt away."

"So I don't have to stay in the ground all the time, hey?"

"No; just for a little while each day, while the suckers are looking down at you."

"Do I eat?" he wants to know.

"You do."

"What do I eat?" demands the dizzy boob.

"Anything!" I says, getting impatient.

"Kin I have plenty of pork chops and onions?"

"Sure; you can also have Grant's Tomb, and the Woolworth Building for dessert. Now come on; we got to get the show opened."

"Think I'll take a chance," he says.

"You ain't taking any chance, kid. *We're* doing all that sort of thing. All *you* take is some nice money—if business is good."

"Do I get paid now?" Gosh, a boob is a horrible pest, what?

"That's up to Professor Dr. Sweeney. We'll see him right away."

When we reached the show Joe was concluding his performance with the brush and some stuff that passes for paint.

"Professor," I opens up, "I want you to meet one of Duckout's most intellectual citizens, Mr. Clem Clinker. Mr. Clinker, shake hands with Professor Dr. Joseph Sweeney."

"Glad to know you, kid," pipes Joe, offering a stained hand. "Er—I'm doing a little painting. My European artist is now ill, so I hadda do some dirty work myself. A little out of my line, but a relief from the —er—mental strain of working in the interests of science and—ah—humanity. Now, the space you see in this here sign is reserved for your name, being the one honored to act as my subject. Clem Clinker, is it? Well, well, well—that's a very charming mess for a name. Watch me smear it on the canvas."

Joe proceeds to insert the name of Mr. Clinker, and when the sign was completed, it read as follows:

ATTENTION!

Kindly take notice that Mr. Clem Clinker, an honored citizen of Duckout, has given his consent to Professor Dr. Joseph Sweeney, M. D., and Hypnotist, to be placed in a rigid

state of hypnosis, after which he is to be placed in a wooden box and lowered six feet in the ground, where he is to remain for the period of six days and nights without food or drink. This is being done as an experiment in the interests of science and the world in general. If the experiment proves a success, it will mean that anæsthetics will no longer have to be administered prior to an operation as a means of benumbing a patient's sensibilities.

The public is invited to attend.

After Clem read the weird announcement, he gives a whinny of fear.

"What d'yer mean, as an experiment?" he demands. "If they is any monkey business about this job I'm gonna quit now!"

"My boy," soothes Joe, "it's all in fun. I couldn't hypnotize a bowlegged fish hawk. Don't worry, you'll be awake all the time. All you gotta do is make a bluff that you're hypnotized, and keep perfectly quiet. I'll attend to the rest. You'll get some real money at the end of the experiment."

He sure did. But me and Joe never figured on *that* part!

III.

MONDAY AFTERNOON arrived on time, and so did the crowd. Thanks to the blurb in the *Weekly Wow*, which was a shade better than anything ever hatched out by the Grimm Brothers, the mob in front of the tent was google-eyed with curiosity. Of course, we kept them waiting outside as long as possible, that being a part of the showman's bag of tricks. The more people that see other people in front of a show, the more people will join the other people in front of the show. Simple, huh?

Meantime, inside the tent, Joe, Clem Clinker and me had dug a hole in the ground, six feet deep and two feet in width. Just large enough to fit a wooden box. At the end of this box we attached a shaft that acted like a periscope. The big idea, and it was some idea, was to sink the box in the ground, with Mr. Clem Clinker on board, and have the shaft stick up above the surface about three feet.

Now, through this shaft, the dear public would be able to look down and have a peep at Clem, while he was supposed to be hypnotized into a deep snooze. In order that they could see the head and shoulders of our subject, we suspends a light in the box, midway, just enough to satisfy the customers that we actually had the goop down there, as advertised. The people was supposed to file past, take a peep in the deep, and then be on their way.

Of course, just as soon as the tent was empty, Clem would wiggle up through the shaft, and walk around to the dressing tent, in the rear, and hide. In different words, we had no intention of leaving Clem down there for the full week, as the customers thought. At the same time, believe you me, had we known how Clem was gonna turn out—sweet sugar!—we would of kept 'im down the hole until the moon turns a backflip!

Half an hour after I begin to sell the tickets, there was standing room only. We charged a quarter a smack to man, woman, child or whatever you happened to be. The push blew in so fast that Joe comes dashing out front, rubbing his hands.

"I guess we're pretty good showmen, huh?" I says.

"Showmen!" echoes Joseph. "Kid, we're world-beaters!" Ten minutes later we start the show. Come along in and take a look at this:

In the rear of the tent, Professor Dr. Joseph Sweeney paces around and around the wooden box and the excavation, with his hands behind his back, and apparently in deep thought. In order that he might look like something besides a hard boiled bandit or a gunman, Joe has bought a pair of them horn-rim hoot-owl glasses, which he has plastered on his face. He also rents a Tuxedo from some waiter, or the like, and it fits him like a kid glove fits an elephant's hind leg. On his red head he's wearing a plug hat that Thomas Jefferson must of quit wearing before he ran for President.

Beside the wooden box stands Mr. Clem Clinker, getting stage fright each time Joe walks around him. First he'd look at the top of the tent, switch his weight from the right to the left leg, then he'd blink at the audience and gaze at the wooden box. A scared boob was Mr. Clinker!

Suddenly, Professor Dr. Sweeney—(ha

ha!)—halts in his mysterious pacing and faces the audience dramatically. After which he starts off with a peach of a lecture about hypnotism, science, physics, and assorted apple-sauce. How Joe dug up the lecture is still a mystery to me. However, it certainly was a riot! He used words that even the dictionary wasn't big enough to hold without busting.

"And so, ladees-s and gentle-mun-n," concludes Joe, with a great flourish of hands, "I shall now proceed to experiment with this brave son of your beautiful village, this remarkably fine character, known to you all as Mr. Clem Clinker!"

Clem sidles over to Joe, looking pale around the chin.

"I feel kinda dizzy," he whispers.

"Shut up, and keep still!" hisses Joe, edging near Clem. Then, turning to the customers, he says: "Mr. Clinker has just requested me to ask all you folks to wish him well—er—in case this experiment in the interest of science does not come out successfully."

At that Clem turns a little paler, and edges toward the side wall. I head 'im off promptly.

"Don't be a nut," I buzzes in his ear. "Think of the big money you're gonna get."

"Things don't look right to me," he whimpers. "Suppose when I get down in that there hole a cyclone comes along and blows everybody away; how 'm I gonna get out again, hey?"

"Step this way, my dear Mr. Clinker," booms Joe. "I am about to place you in a state of hypnosis. Soon as you are unconscious of your surroundings, you shall be deposited in that wooden box, lowered in that excavation, and shall remain there until eleven o'clock next Saturday night. At that time, I shall have you exhumed before a large audience, revive you, and then we can tell whether or not our experiment is a success or a failure. If you are still alive and well, I shall add my name and yours to the honor roll of science and achievement. Now, then, Mr. Clinker, look me in the eyes. Attention!"

Then the fun begins.

Although he had been rehearsed in the act fifty times, Clem stands before Joe and blinks like a tomcat.

"You are about to pass into a deep hypnotic sleep," intones Joe, making passes at Clem with his hands. "Sleep, sleep, I say!"

"Now?" asks Clem, wiggling his nose. At that Joe steps up close to him and snaps, "Swoon away, you fathead! D' yer wanna queer the act?"

Clem swoons. He flops backward, and I grab 'im just as he was about to take a header into the hole.

"Good!" says Joe to the audience. "The subject is now in a perfect state of hypnosis, and he will remain in that state until I revive him next Saturday. My assistant and I will now place him in the box and lower him in the earth."

We do that. We also proceed to cover it with dirt, then Joe takes the first peek down the shaft to see how Clem looked. Evidently, he didn't look so good.

"Keep your eyes shut!" buzzes Joe down the shaft. "You're supposed to be fast asleep, remember." Then, turning to the audience, he says: "I now invite the audience to file up front and view Mr. Clinker through the shaft as he lies quiet and peaceful in the deep sleep of hypnosis. One at a time, please, one at a time."

The customers come forward, take a look, then return to their seats.

"Now, remembah, ladies and gentlemen," says Joe, "this exhibit will last all week. You're invited to come in here each day and see how the subject progresses. Er—use the front entrances on your way out, and thank you for your kind attention."

And so— But let's hop into the last chapter and get it over with.

IV.

DURING the rest of the week we packed 'em in the show fast and furious. Each time the audience departed, we let Clem wiggle out through the shaft and hid him in the dressing tent.

On the second day, he demanded to know how much he was gonna receive for all his hard work. We slips him a couple of dollars in advance and thought that would

keep him shut until we decided what to pay him when he concludes his act. However, nothing stirring! He let forth such a squark that we had to give him twenty-five dollars and promise him another twenty-five at the end of the week. He had us right, and he knew it. Without him, the show would be a terrible bust, and a bloomer to boot.

"Be a good boy, Clem," pleads Joe, "and we'll all be rich some day."

"When?" demands Mr. Clinker.

"Leave it to me," replies Joe. "Just stick around and we'll all wear diamonds."

"Gimme the money and I kin buy me own diamonds," growls Clem.

Joe walks away in disgust.

Well, sir—or ma'am—by the time Saturday night came around the entire town was on edge. The stunt had even attracted the attention of the surrounding hamlets and the homespun folks flivvered in for the grand finale.

"Looks like a clean up," I says to Joe, peeking out of the tent. "I guess we're clever showmen, hey?"

"Doc," enthuses Joe, rubbing his hands, "we're positively world beaters! C'mon, suppose we start the last show a little earlier? Go back to the dressing tent and see about Clem. Tell 'im to get ready to duck into the box."

Me and Joe rush back to the dressing tent and find Clem missing. A cold chill, as they remark in the detective stories, ran up and down my back like a tattoo. Figure it out for yourselves. If Mr. Clem Clinker had made up what passes for his mind to leave us at the last minute, where would *we* land? Answer: In the local cooler! Either that or we'd have to make a quick get-away.

"Suffering Kansas!" raves Joe, "the goop has flooped! Talk about luck, huh? Here we are with a mob outside waiting to get in at fifty cents a smash, and the poor boob beats it away."

"Let's beat it, too," I suggests "There's a train passing through this burg in fifteen minutes and—"

"Beat it—beans!" snorts Joe. "*I'm* no quitter. You stick around here, doc, while I go down the main drag and see if I can dig up that pie-faced chump. If you hear a racket like Gettysburg, you'll know I found Mr. Clem Clinker."

He comes back half an hour later, minus the escaped subject. Two minutes after he returned, the left side wall flaps up and in walks our life saver.

"Where in the heck have you been?" flares Joe, glaring at Clem.

"I ain't been no place," he retorts. "I was up that big tree behind the dressing tent, doing a lotta thinking."

"Thinking?" parrots Joe. "Boy, don't make me laugh. When they knitted your brains, somebody dropped a stitch."

"Yeah?" mumbles Clem. "Well, I may be dumb, but I have just decided that I wasn't a going down that there hole tonight. I'm getting kinda tired and stiff keeping quiet while the folks stare down that shaft at me. I'm through."

Try and get a laugh out of that!

"D' yer mean to stand there and tell me that you ain't going through with the act?" bellers Joe, getting red, white and pink in the face.

"Well, maybe I could be bought back," says Clem.

So that was it. And I thought I had selected a prize boob! Well, there was only one thing to do, and Joe does it.

"All right, my boy," says Joe, "just to show you whot sort of a trouper I am, here's a extra ten dollars."

"I wanna hundred dollars," purrs Clem.

A pretty live kind of boob, what?

"A hundred dollars!" ejaculates Joe. "You forgot to ask for the Bank of England. Kid, you're all wet!" Clem steps up a little closer and we notice some more trouble.

The big fish has shaved himself as clean as a trout's back!

"O sole mio!" raves Joe. "Now we're ruined! Your whiskers should of stayed on your map. How in the Kentucky is a guy going to shave when he's fast asleep for six days, hey? Oh, what a break!"

"I forgot about that," mumbles Clem. "I felt kinda funny with all that hair growing on my face and neck, so I just naturally shaves it off."

At that moment a black tomcat comes

yowling through the tent. Joe takes one look and grabs it by the tail. With a pair of scissors he proceeds to clip off a little fur, all of which the puss had plenty.

"Doc," he says, "gimme that mucilage outta that box. I intend to replace some hair on Mr. Clinker's well-shaved skin."

He does. Clem files protest after protest, but Joe slaps the fur around his face from ear to ear. Of course, it was far from a neat job, but, when down in the hole, it would look a darn sight better than nothing.

That over with, Clem doubled his arguments in favor of a hundred dollars before going on with the act. In desperation Joe gives it to 'im. What would you? We had at least three hundred dollars outside the tent, waiting to pay its admission in to see the final exhibition, and if we refused Clem his hold-up money, we'd lose everything.

Meantime, our ideas about boobs in general begins to change rapidly. So that was that. Now comes the end of an imperfect day.

The tent was packed like a chorus girl's trunk. The only standing room left was on the heads of the customers. Clem is in his customary place in the wooden box, down in Mamma Earth, ready and willing to be brought up and revived. In order to make up for what Clem demands, meaning the hundred berries, we decide at the last minute to jimmy up the price to seventy-five cents, instead of fifty. The boys and girls paid it so fast that we was sorry we hadn't jacked it up to a dollar!

After pacing up and down with his hands behind his back, Professor Dr. Joseph Sweeney begins his final lecture. It takes him twenty minutes to say absolutely nothing with the largest words in captivity, all of which went over the knobs of the audience and lands in the next county.

"And now, la-dees and gentle-mun-n," concludues Joe, "the time arrives when we are to see whether our experiment in the interest of science has been a success or a failure."

He then called for volunteers from the audience to come forward and remove the earth in order to exhume the subject. Two natives volunteer to do the shoveling and, five minutes later, the wooden box was exposed. Before going on with the act, Joe tells the volunteers to return to their seats, thanking them for their noble assistance. If something went wrong, it would never do to have the dear boys so close.

As Joe and me jump down in the hole and remove the lid, the back tomcat lets forth a loud yowl and jumps out of the box from near Clem's neck. How he got down there—well, we'll come to that part later!

"Wonder how that browser got down there?" whispers Joe.

"Dunno," I buzzes back, "but a black cat has always been a jinx to me!"

Joe, sensing that the audience were murmuring about the cat, got up from the hole, and announces, "La-dees and gentle-mun-n, it may interest you to know that the cat that just leaped from the box was a pet of Mr. Clinker's and, missing its master, must have crawled down the shaft to be near him. Cat's are wonderful creatures, don't you think?"

Joe's a quick thinker, eh?

Then me and Joe starts to lift the box to the surface. As we did so, a rock slips off the bank and lands on Clem's left ear. He grunts, opens his eyes, and mutters, "What's the idea?"

"Shut up and keep your peepers closed!" hisses Joe. "We are about to carry you up before the audience." We starts again to lift up the box, and another rock becomes dislodged and socks poor Clem on the bean. He grunts a little louder and demands to know what we were tossing stones at him for.

"Keep quiet," soothes Joe, "everything is sitting pretty!"

For the third time we starts to lift the box to the surface. Not so good! Half way up, my foot gets tangled up in something and I slip. Down goes Clem to the bottom of the hole. The shock near bounces him clear out of the box.

"All right, Clem," says Joe. "Just a little accident, that's all. Just keep quiet, and we'll have you up in a jiffy!"

Finally, we get the box up before the audience and Joe begins with the solemn business of reviving. As Clem lays nice and still in the coop, Joe makes a few maj-

estic passes with his hands over Clem's sleeping face.

"Awake! Awake!" booms Joe. "I command you to awake! Arise and return to the bosom of your friends in Duckout!"

Clem, bracing himself with his hands against the side of the box, manages to raise his head and shoulders a wee bit.

"Gimme a drink," he mutters weakly, then flops back in the box, a total loss.

"Bravo!" shouts Joe, "the experiment has been a wonderful success! Naturally, the subject is a trifle weak from his long sojourn in the earth, and from a lack of food. However, you will read all about it in the next edition of your local paper. Meantime, I thank you one and all for your kind attention, and you may pass out through the front entrance. Good night, everybodee!"

After the customers had drifted out, thinking Lord knows what, we picked up Clem and sat him on a chair. A moment later a shrewd looking gent looms up toward us out of the darkness and speaks a little piece.

"I represent the Huckleberry County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Cats," he opens up, flashing some sort of badge.

"Well, I can't help that!" says Joe.

"You are under arrest for mistreating a black cat. You cut a few bunches of fur off his back, and then placed him in that box without food and water. Our society will not tolerate such things. The fine is fifty dollars or ten days in jail. Take your choice!"

A snappy customer, eh?

"I don't know anything about the cat," fumes Joe. "The darn critter must of sneaked down the hole when I wasn't looking. How about it, Clem?"

"Don't know anything about it, only the cat was down there clawin' at my neck, that's all *I* know."

"There's the proof," says the stranger. "He can be a witness. You won't have a chance in court. You're in serious trouble, I tell you. We won't stand for such cruelty in this county!"

Well, to amputate a long story, to save the time and trouble of going to court, we slips him the fifty dollars fine and told 'im to beat it. Having cleaned up a small fortune on the show, we felt in good humor; otherwise we would have razzed that bird clean out of the tent! So that was all settled. However, kindly remain seated for another moment and see the finish. It was good!

Half an hour after Clem had left us, we strolled out of the tent, down the Midway, and then made a short cut through a lot directly across from the show grounds. Behind an old barn we note a light flickering in the inky darkness. As we got nearer, we heard a pair of familiar voices, and then saw our two friends, Mr. Clem Clinker and the stranger. Clem is holding a roll of bills and doing a little act in common division.

"There's ten for you," he's saying, "and there's ten for me. Thare's another ten for you and one for me. I guess we're pretty good showmen ourselves, hey, Charlie?"

"Sure," says Charlie, or the "officer," "we're world-beaters! And it's a good thing you managed to get that cat down in the hole with you, ain't it? And I'm glad you told me Sweeney clipped off that fur. Oh, boy! Go ahead—pass me some more dough, Clem!"

In a flash, Joe has his coat off, his sleeves rolled up, and he's in the midst before they knew what hit 'em. As he socked away, he passes out a few remarks.

"There's one for you!" he says, tapping Clem on the chin with a torrid right. "And there's one for thee!" he goes on, smacking Charlie on the nose. "There's another for you!" and Clem gets one on the left ear. "And here's another for thee!" and Charlie receives a peach on the button. "There's—"

Five minutes later Joe satisfies his lust for revenge and we head through the night for the hotel.

"Well, I guess we're some clever showmen, eh?" I kids, as we walk along. "World beaters, what?"

"World beaters—bah!" snorts Professor Dr. Joseph Sweeney. "Take it from me, doc, there's a sucker showman born every minute—and two boobs to take 'im!"

How about it, Mr. Barnum?

THE END

The Tawny Peril

By WILLIAM BYRON MOWERY

CHAK-OOR, the great master of Mt. Dunali Major, perched on a lightning-blasted pine twenty miles down the valley from his nest. He was intent upon a bevy of hoary marmots that played along a sunny ledge. For a full hour the eagle had sat immobile, poised to swoop when one of the " whistling pigs " strayed too far from its rock hole. His eyes had not once turned to the spruce forest below; they had not picked up the flickering shadow of a hunter slipping from tree to tree.

From the purple shadows of the virgin spruce came the shattering cr-aa-ck of a rifle. The peculiar *zimm-mm* of a bullet screamed upward through thin air.

The sudden, paralyzing stab of a needle point seared across Chak-oor's breast. The jar of it stunned him; tore his talons from their clutch of the dead limb. His wings refused to spread; he started to fall, spinning around and around helplessly; struck the narrow ledge where the finger-roots of his perch-tree grasped a precarious hold; struck and caromed off into the half-a-thousand foot drop to the slope below. The hunter watched, chuckling.

As the spruce tops reached up toward Chak-oor, the soaring muscles of his scapula recovered from their paralysis. Strength flowed out into his wings. They spread and caught the air. At the very instant when the hunter was expecting his prize to crash through the trees to his feet, Chak-oor came out of his spinning; righted himself; careened upward in a long U swoop.

The hunter emptied his magazine—more out of baffled disappointment than in hopes of bringing down the great golden eagle. Then he ran along the slope to a place where a winter avalanche had swept a narrow swath down the mountain side; and watched.

But Chak-oor was too wise to betray his nest by winging straight toward it. The

terror of that steel-jacketed bullet was only a split minute past, but his half-century habits of caution won over his fear and his homing impulse. In long spirals, he climbed till the mountain was small and green below him, and the man was only a mite even to his telescopic eyes. Then he coursed westward toward the sea thirty miles away; then swung south; then north and east and finally back to the snowy peak of Dunali Major.

The hunter picked up a small female eagle he had shot that morning on her nest, and started toward his cabin down the mountain valley.

"I'll get 'im," he muttered to himself, choosing his path wisely through the avalanche débris. "I'll find where he's nestin' if it takes all summer. 'Sides t' bounty, he'll fetch a rare price—that boy will!"

II.

Once he was safely back with his sedate helpmate and was guarding the three big splotchy eggs on the ledge where the pair had nested for two generations of man, Chak-oor's wound began to stiffen and grow sore. Deep and jagged, it had bled till his breast plumage was spongy and bright crimson.

The next morning, at the first flush of a misty dawn, he tried a hop into the air. His leaden wings spread slowly and painfully; his short flight was wabbly and erratic. With difficulty he flopped back to the ledge beside the nest, and folded his wings. His mate understood nothing of his trouble; she circled around the peak with swoops that invited him to rise and accompany her. Finally realizing he was not coming, she flew off alone northeast across the range toward a muskeg lake, where a white wavy rookery had finished its mating and nesting quarrels, and had settled to the business of brooding.

If he had been left alone to fast and heal himself, Chak-oor would quickly have recovered from his wound. But that was not to be. Out of the clouds playing over Greater Dunali came the one enemy whom he had reason to fear on that morning of all mornings.

The rival golden male was a mighty and younger bird, lacking only a few inches of Chak-oor's nine-foot spread. Twice he had battled with the master of Dunali Major for possession of the favored ledge; twice he had been beaten away after a feathery carnage on the airy arena.

His nest had been down the valley on a smaller, more accessible peak. By his lack of caution he had betrayed his eerie to the hunter on the previous morning; and his mate had fallen to the bark of the rifle. Now, morose and grim-tempered he hurtled down from the lacy clouds; lusting for a fight, covetous not only of Chak-oor's home but of his mate also.

The wounded master of Dunali heard the challenging scream and hiss of wings. He turned his head sidewise and looked up, barely in time to hop aside and elude the vicious thrust of beak and clutch of feathered talons. The call of battle tugged at him. He launched himself stiffly in pursuit of his enemy who had swooped on past after missing his stroke. But Chak-oor, who could usually pick a swift canvasback out of the air, now flopped heavily, like a lumbering crow. His agile rival easily spiraled above him and attacked from this immense vantage point.

Mercifully the battle was short. Chak-oor was stunned by the enemy's wings; stabbed by beak and talons. He tried to rise to the ledge again; but his wings failed him. His rival, screaming his *chak-chak-chak* triumphantly, beat him down, toward the gnarled conifers at timber line. The harrying pursuit ended, only when the once master of the peak dashed against the slope, entangled in a thicket. The rival eagle circled over him, saw he did not move, then breasted the steep angle straight back to the ledge.

III.

For three days Chak-oor huddled in the thicket, unable to fly. Foxes that ran unawares into his covert backed off and barked at him. A gray wolf eyed him in the bright moonlight, but decided the big bird still had too much fight in him to pay for a meal on the tough, purgative flesh. A flock of crows found him out; and after their

noisy fashion cawed around him for a whole morning.

On the fourth day, spurred by hunger-pangs, the eagle wabbled out of the thicket. He managed to catch a few big, short-tailed mice by overturning stones. They put strength enough in him so that he could fly a few hundred yards at a time, painfully, slowly.

Swift things of the air, or even rabbits and lemmings, were out of all hope as food. Chak-oor's first flight was to the glacier stream which came down from the mountains a step at a time. Beside the overfalls, spent salmon lined the banks and struggled feebly in shallow eddies. The weak, tasteless flesh was not at all to his liking; but the alternative was starvation.

On the sixth day he was strong enough for a flight to the sea, and out to a reef where he had often fished when game was scarce, as periodically it was, in the woody haunts of his range. There he caught sculpins in low-tide rock pools; and turned over stones where he heard the *zoom-zoom* of singing fish. A few days later he flew back toward the peak where his rival had usurped his nest and mate and peeping eggs.

The latter, sitting triumphantly on the ledge, screamed a warning, a challenge, across the void at him. Chak-oor was too wise to answer the challenge; his ragged feathers, his wings still weak, made him swerve aside. He alighted on Little Dunali, a mile away, and took up his solitary abode.

The female, his former mate, suddenly began visiting the sea several times a day. Chak-oor realized that the splotchy eggs had burst; that three hungry eaglets were craning their necks for her return to the nest. He itched to help her rob the fish-hawks; to guard his young against tawny marauders from the mountain cañons.

As his full strength began to come back to him, Chak-oor tried a thing which his caution had always kept him from attempting. He was morose and vengeful; the fish diet had palled; game more to his palate still eluded him. He flew down the valley one day; watched till the hunter had left his cabin on the cleared slope; then dropped down upon a kid that was pasturing in a tiny prairie.

But before he could eat of the dainty flesh, he was driven away by a big lynx that had seen him swoop and had heard the bleat of the kid. The tawny old enemy snarled spitefully as Chak-oor screamed above him, too wary to attack. Between the two, one master of the air as the other was of the ground, there had been a feud of years standing.

A red anger kindled in the hunter when he discovered the killing the next morning. But his ire was directed against the lynx, that had been guilty of cruel forays in the past, and who left his plain signs around the eagle's kill.

The man threw grub into a gunny-bag, and put his quintet of brush hounds upon the cold trail, swearing to chase the lynx clear across the range if necessary.

For that whole day and until noon of the next, the hunt wound in and out of the gorge. The lynx sensed the relentless pursuit. With the brush hounds pressing hotly upon his fresh trail, he left the lower valley and made for the fastnesses at the border of Dunali Major.

At the foot of the mountain the cañon stream forked, one branch swerving northeast, the other south. Both ended in the glaciers that gave them their milk-white torrents; both were flanked along their entire length by impassable cañon bluffs and at their source by ice overfalls. The only passes were over the two Dunali peaks. But the nimble-witted, nimble-footed hounds had turned the lynx from the easier pass and forced him up the rugged slope of Major.

Chak-oor had watched the hunt come up the narrowing valley. From his perch on Little Dunali he saw the hungry lynx, driven desperate, climb a tree and look back at his pursuers, a scant half-mile behind. The cat waited till the hunter was within rifle shot; then leaped down and started the steep climb to the peak. Not far beyond the tree, the dogs were stopped by the man-high wall they could not scale. They waited for the hunter, who hurried to boost them up.

But he stayed his hand, watching with something of awe a swift drama up on the eagle's eerie.

Chak-oor's rival was sitting on the lip of the rock. Momentarily the hunter expected to see him swoop at the lynx and warn him aside. A mere speck in the sky, the female was coming home with a grayling taken from a fish-hawk. A mile away, Chak-oor sat immobile, watching every move of his mate and of his three enemies.

When the lynx was a bow-shot down the cliff, the rival eagle screamed and flew at him. The lynx crouched and hissed. The rival would not come to grips with those ripping claws and sharper teeth, but beat the air above. After a moment the lynx realized it was only a bluster, and started to scale the almost perpendicular rock a hundred feet high. Then was the moment for the eagle to dislodge him and dash him down, but still he feared to close in.

From far off the female had seen her younglings threatened. Dropping her burden, she darted like a teal for the nest. Just as she reached the ledge, the lynx crawled over the lip, clawed a pawful of feathers from the rival, and drove him off to a safer height. Without hesitation, with no attempt at strategy, she pitched at the tawny enemy whom she and her great mate together had driven off a score of times.

The fight ended quickly. The female had given up her wing advantage and met her foe on his own footing. Her only help from the rival eagle was screams and wild gyrations. Her talons and beak were small hurt to the thick hide and bristly fur of the lynx. The big cat slashed her feathers with each razor claw. She was drawn into the ripping death and held. Her struggles weakened.

Then the hunter saw a shadow glide across the slope. Looking upward he saw Chak-oor, like a brown streak, volt down into the fight.

The great eagle's beak ripped a furrow in the lynx's stubby muzzle, and his talons clutched deeply into the cat's shoulder. The lynx loosed the female and pivoted, snarling. But Chak-oor was cunning, from incessant fighting with the cat tribe. He danced aside to the very lip; and there waited for the lynx to seize him. The cat's teeth closed upon his thigh; his own steel-hooked talons clutched the cat's foreleg.

Then Chak-oor flopped off into space.

The hunter, with breath bated, saw a whirling mass of feathers and gray fur careen downward. Saw the eagle loosen his hold in mid-air. Saw the cat, feet vainly outspread and clawing the air, drop with a crashing thud on a rock, and lie still. Saw Chak-oor, bedraggled, heavy-winged and wounded afresh, circle back toward the nest.

The rival had returned to the ledge, now that the tawny peril had been killed. Sitting triumphantly on the rock-lip again, he *chak-chaked* his challenge.

The hunter was very wise in the matter of wild things. He remembered the female he had shot; recollected the wound he had given Chak-oor. In a flash he understood the strange triangle and how it had come to be.

A hot wave of admiration for the great eagle dashed all his mercenary thoughts aside. Even his callous nature was stirred by the shrewd, fearless battle he had witnessed.

"I'm damned if you do!" he cried angrily.

As the rival spread his wings to attack the wounded master of Dunali Major, the rifle barked sharply. *Once.*

THE END

ORCHARD PETALS

THE buds, like little candles, white
And pink upon each tree,
Hold each aloft its little light,
So brave and gallantly
That we who walk in worried night,
Must smile, to see.

Mary Carolyn Davies.

The Unseen Face

By JOSEPH GOLLOMB

LIFE, like a spider, often joins with its web the most unrelated things. In a Meig's City side street, for instance, lay the crumpled figure of a man in laborer's overalls, shot from ambush. In a glass-inclosed sun porch fitted up as a biological laboratory a fragile, scholarly man, Professor Darwin Goldie, was peering happily through a magnifying glass at an ant hill of *myrmica rubra* imported from England. What thread could join these two since neither man had ever heard of the other?

Then again, in the immaculate kitchen of their cottage in Faculty Row at Meig's University Professor Goldie's wife was preparing a light lunch her husband could absorb without looking up from his ants. What pattern of events could connect this daughter of a long line of professors with the burly figure of Chief Quinn of the Meig's City police? Yet, spiderlike, life was spinning its intricate web and, laying a thread between these two, sent a current of electricity through it and thrilled a spell.

Mrs. Goldie, with characteristic confidence in her ability to deal with the unexpected, answered the telephone promptly. But after five minutes' talk with Chief Quinn over the wire she was still in doubt as to whether she and her husband wished to have anything to do with the other two figures in the incipient tangle of web. Unlike her usual self she decided to let her husband say yes or no. She put the receiver down on the table and went to the door of the sun porch.

"Chief Quinn of the police would like to speak to you, Harry," she said.

He looked more closely at a little red-headed ant who was, as he could see through his high-power lens, waving a tiny tentacle or something.

"I don't see how Professor Ernie could possibly be right about the petilate abdominal segment of *myrmica rubra*," he murmured.

"Shall I tell Chief Quinn you will speak to him?" his wife asked firmly.

Professor Goldie looked up helplessly over the tops of his glasses.

"Eh? Oh! Er—what does he want? Could you perhaps do it, my dear?"

"He wants you to help him find out whoever it was that killed somebody."

"Me? What can I do about it?"

"You found the murderer of Lemuel Chase after the police had given up the hunt. You won ten thousand dollars' reward with it. And you were thereby the direct cause of the reopening of Meig's University, when it was about to be sold under the sheriff's attachment," she reminded him, trying not to betray undue pride.

He shook his head.

"If it weren't for your common sense and intuition and rescue at a critical moment—"

"Then you *will* help Chief Quinn?"

Professor Goldie watched the little red-headed ant stop to gossip with another little red-headed ant.

"My dear," he explained absently, "I have neither the equipment for police work nor the slightest desire to acquire it. And I haven't any time for more police rewards, even if I could win them. With our mortgage paid off and a balance in the bank—"

"There is no reward offered in this case. It is a poor workingman who has been murdered, and the police haven't the slightest idea who did it or why. You must decide if you wish to refuse to help."

Professor Goldie looked down on his imported ant hill swarming with its highly complex and wonderfully organized social life and felt like a child being taken away from a show.

"Well," he sighed, "since you insist on it, my dear!"

An hour later they were in the office of Chief Quinn of the Meig's City police. On a portable stretcher lay the limp body of a man in overalls.

"Very kind of you to come, professor," Chief Quinn said earnestly. "And you, too, Mrs. Goldie. I wouldn't 'a' troubled you if it wasn't that we're completely up a tree in this case. This poor fellow was found in Drake's Alley this morning, murdered. Shot from behind at a distance of about fifteen feet, near as I can guess from the bullet penetration.

We don't know who he is, so it's hard to look for any enemy he may have had. And there's no robbery motive, either. There are two dollars and forty cents in his pocket—and not a thing else. And the only thing we found as a clew—if it is a clew—is this—"

From his desk he picked up a dried-up cigar butt, an inch long and hard bitten.

"Not much to go on, is there?" he went on apologetically. "Especially as we don't even know if this cigar butt was thrown away by this poor fellow or by the murderer."

"Indeed, it *is* very little on which to base any deduction," Professor Goldie said, half worried, half hopeful. "So little that I don't see how I, with my lack of experience in such matters, can do anything to—"

"Do you suppose you can find out if this remnant of cigar was discarded by this poor man?" his wife interrupted, challenging her husband to retreat.

He looked appealing at her, begging to be allowed to go back to his red-headed *myrmica rubra*. But Mrs. Goldie, with that silent language long-married couples develop, directed his gaze to the rough garment of the victim of cowardly murder. So with an inward sigh he brought his myopic vision to bear on the chewed end of the cigar butt.

Then, turning, he inserted his two fingers in the dead man's mouth and with the impassiveness of his medical school days parted the gray lips.

"Harry!" cried his horrified wife. "What *are* you doing?"

"You asked me to see if this cigar remnant was discarded by this man," he replied, peering close at the gaping mouth. "No, it was not."

Chief Quinn struggled with his pride. A month before, when Professor Goldie first came and offered to help find the murderer of Lemuel Chase, after even Chicago detectives had given up the hunt as hopeless, Chief Quinn had had a hard time hiding a grin at the little man's effrontery. This time it was difficult business not to show how much he was at sea as to how the professor could have discovered what he did about the cigar.

"May I ask, professor, how you get that—that this cigar butt wasn't this poor fellow's?" he finally had to ask.

"When I was reading up on the technique of crime detection," Professor Goldie ruminated, "I found from Professor Hans Gross's *Die Erforschung des Sachverhalts straftbarer Handlungen* that cigar butts were valuable as clews because of the impress of teeth on them. You will notice—fortunately the chewed end was dried nicely, retaining the mark of the teeth—that one tooth is a particularly long one, the canine; an exceptionally long canine. Whereas this man's canine is, if anything, shorter than the average."

Chief Quinn blushed like a schoolboy. It was, after all, a simple bit of deduction he had overlooked, simple as Columbus's trick with the egg after one knew how to make it stand on end.

"Well, we've learned something!" he said with a decent degree of heartiness.

"Exceedingly little," Professor Goldie suggested. "So little that I really can't see what use I can be—"

"I suppose my husband can borrow this cigar remnant for further study at home," Mrs. Goldie suggested.

"I'll say he can!" Chief Quinn exclaimed and reached a muscular forefinger and thumb for the cigar butt.

But Professor Goldie put out a restraining hand. "Pardon me, Mr. Quinn, but perhaps this bit of cigar had better be handled as little as possible."

From the back of his lapel he took out a long pin, such as he kept with him for handling insect specimens, and, carefully running it through the cigar butt, he looked around for something else. Seeing a half empty box of the chief's cigarettes, he absent-mindedly emptied it. Then with the adroitness of a laboratory research worker he mounted the cigar butt on its pin inside the cigarette box so that, like Mohammed's coffin, it stayed suspended in mid-air without touching anything that might fray it.

"You say this poor man is unknown?" he asked the chief. "And what is his occupation?"

Chief Quinn shook his head. "Can't even guess. Something rough, I figure, from his overalls."

Professor Goldie bent over the dead man's hands

"His flesh seems soft for an unskilled laborer," he murmured.

He rose and, taking up Chief Quinn's penholder, stuck the wrong end in the inkwell. With this he bent down to the dead man's right hand and looked at palm and fingers closely. He even ran the sensitive tips of his own fingers over parts of these. Then as he found something in his tactual search he made small circular patches on his own right hand with the inky end of Chief Quinn's penholder.

When he had thus made four such marks on his right hand and fingers he waved his hand gently in the air to dry it. This done, he took out his handkerchief and, wrapping his right hand carefully, used it as little as possible.

It was only when he was about to leave that he noticed how intently his wife and Chief Quinn had been watching his queer occupation. He colored.

"There may be nothing in it," he muttered hastily. "I'll be glad to let you know what results I get, if any."

Whenever his wife saw that far-afield look in her husband's eyes she forbore to ask questions. If he brought anything home from his mind's wanderings he would share it with her. But if she distracted him with questions at such a time he would be sure to lose his way on whatever trail he was following. So she bade good-by to Chief Quinn for both and gently piloted her wandering husband toward the trolley.

Arrived at his little porch laboratory Professor Goldie put the cigar butt under a glass bell jar and, guarding his ink-marked, handkerchief-wrapped right hand from rude contact, sallied forth across the campus to the machine shop, where Pete Haskins, the university's genius-of-all-work was making a water-weighing machine for the physics laboratory.

"Peter, I have been drafted into work outside my specialty," Professor Goldie apologized. "And I wish you would help me."

He unwrapped the handkerchief from about his right hand and showed the inkstains on the palm and fingers.

"Please look at these spots and consider them as representing callouses or toughening

of the skin at these points, due to the daily use of tools. Now what tool, if any, would press against the hand at these spots?"

Pete carefully examined the evidence. It was a new problem to him and he felt corresponding responsibility. He adjusted the professor's hand this way and that.

"It seems to me—" he ventured after five minutes of experiment. Then with professorial distrust of premature conclusions he withdrew his attempt at verdict and went over to a cabinet and selected a large variety of tools. One after another he placed these in Professor Goldie's hand and showed him how to hold each, carefully noting where the handles touched the hand.

Suddenly both exclaimed in triumph. The ink spots fitted perfectly to the places where the handle of an engraver's carving tool would press on palm and fingers.

"Then he was an engraver," Pete declared with solemn finality.

"Yes, and that accounts for the fineness of the man's skin texture and hair!" Professor Goldie exclaimed. "He is an artizan and not a laborer. Thank you, Pete, very much!"

"If it's thanks that's under discussion it isn't for you to hand them out, professor!" Pete declared combatively. "If it wasn't for you doing that wonderful bit of detecting with the Chase murder poor little Meig's University would have been bought by that window sash company for a factory, and I would have had to go back to making sardine cans."

Professor Goldie blushed, and they exchanged further amenities quite unlike any that ever before passed between two men engaged in trailing an unknown murderer.

Back in his porch laboratory Professor Goldie furtively took out from a cupboard one of his wife's demi-tasse cups, which he had stolen for every kind of weird use but coffee. Mixing in it a semifluid paste of finely ground plaster, he smeared the bitten end of his cigar end with a bit of butter and carefully set it into the still soft mixture. While waiting for it to harden he took a look at his beloved *myrmica rubra*.

"Any progress, Harry?"

Vaguely his wife's question penetrated to the far-off husband.

"Why—why, with certain modifications my theory as to the function of the *eciton erratica*—" he was murmuring.

But his wife raised her voice.

"I'm referring to the cigar!"

He was so bewildered in the fog of his two unrelated concerns and looked so guilty at being caught at his beloved study that his wife cast up her eyes hopelessly and went back to her paper on "Bobbed Hair Throughout the Ages," which she was to read at the next meeting of the Faculty Women's Club.

But she had spoiled his *myrmica-rubra* mood, and Professor Goldie turned again to the cigar in its now hard cement bed. Taking out the butt with a pin he found a perfect mold of its bitten end.

Into the mold he poured—after smearing the inside of it with more melted butter—a fresh mixture of cement and water. When this, too, had hardened he tapped the mold carefully with a little hammer, broke it and there fell into his palm an excellent life-size cast of the teeth which had bitten the end of the cigar butt just before it was thrown away.

Then, snipping off with scissors the bitten end of the cigar butt itself, he dropped some liquid on it and jabbed it with a glass rod. With a dropper he smeared a bit of the resulting liquid on the slide of his microscope and studied it long, making notes as he did so. Later, with the remainder of the little liquid mess carefully tipped into a test tube, he sallied forth once more.

In one pocket was the plaster cast of the teeth that had bitten the cigar. In the other was the corked test tube with a dilute solution of the bitten end of the butt. In his notebook were some findings of his on both of these.

In the cottage of his friend, Professor Lambie, of the Department of Anatomy and Physiology, our academic sleuth engaged in a long and highly abstruse series of chemical analyses and discussions.

Then he crossed the campus once more and found Professor Enghart, of the art department. For an hour Professor Enghart, with pencil, brush, and water color, was kept busy by Professor Goldie. Finally the head of the department of biology and bio-

chemistry of Meig's University scurried home.

He came, as usual, late to dinner. Years before Mrs. Goldie had given up any attempt to impress his professional mind with the importance of being on time for meals. She did not scold him therefore, but she noted with a kindling eye that he brought home something flat in a paper, knew intuitively that it had to do with what he had derived from the dried-up cigar butt, and waited with little enough patience for part of the meal to pass. Then she burst out.

" Harry Darwin Goldie, I'll thank you for some information on this nasty cigar butt you have been working over all afternoon—or should have been!"

He looked nervously at the determined woman.

" It's still only hypothesis and conjecture, my dear. But it is fairly probable that the murdered man is an engraver. The marks in ink on my fingers and palm, corresponding to the calloused or hardened places on the dead man's palm and fingers, were shown by Pete Haskins to be—"

" Why, how clever of you!" Mrs. Goldie exclaimed. " And what have you got in that flat packet?"

He went out and returned with several sketches in his hand.

" It is just barely possible that these drawings and water color sketches may correspond to reality," he said cautiously.

Mrs. Goldie knew that where her husband said " barely possible " another man would have said " absolutely sure!" She looked at the portraits—there were three or four of the same man.

He was round-headed, dark-complexioned, had broad cheek bones, a low forehead, a very prominent mouth, a mole or two on the face and throat and some kind of erupted rash on his face. One portrait showed a short, thick beard of coarse hair, the other smooth-shaven, but with the darkness of the missing beard indicated. All portraits showed him with the collar of his shirt open and a hairy chest indicated.

" Why, who is this?" she exclaimed.

" It is an approximation of the man who killed the poor fellow in Drake's Alley," he replied timidly.

She put these sketches down without another look at them.

" Harry Darwin Goldie, you've been going to the movies!" she exclaimed. " This is just such a face as you would see playing a murderer. Because I don't see on what other basis you could have conjectured such a complete portrait!"

Her husband looked wilted.

" You may be right, Grace! My deductions, assisted though they were by several of my colleagues, may be entirely worthless, based as they are on so little actual data. I think I had better not bother with this case—"

His wife saw her mistake. Her job in life was to instill confidence into her husband, not to destroy it.

" Well, I want to hear your grounds, Harry," she said. " It seems to me perfectly marvelous that any one could deduce from an old cigar remnant the portrait of the man who had smoked it."

She showed herself so eager to listen that he chirked up a little.

" You may observe, Grace, that in the impress of the teeth on the cigar end—here is a cast I made of them—the upper teeth meet the lower at the biting point in a sort of jutting-out angle. That would make the mouth very prominent, as we have indicated in the portrait. Now such a tooth occlusion is found chiefly in mammals and men whose type is characteristic of the tropics and subtropics, where they are called upon to chew no harded food than fruit or vegetables.

" In climates where meat and tougher foods are eaten such an arrangement of teeth is inadequate, because for effective cutting and grinding teeth should come together straight, one grinding surface full on the other. The result is that people who have the inadequate tooth occlusion as indicated by this cigar butt chew the tough foods of colder climates insufficiently, and put an extra and often excessive strain on their digestive apparatus.

" This results in turn in digestive disturbances, a certain temper and perhaps such rashes and outbreaks on the face as I have had Professor Enghart indicate in this portrait. To confirm my analysis in

this I made a solution of the saliva-impregnated end of the cigar butt, examined it through the microscope and had it qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. The presence of certain elements in the salivary solution bears out the possibility of these rashes."

"And does it also tell you that this man had or has or is supposed to have a round head, broad cheek bones, a low forehead, coarse black hair, and moles?" she asked marveling.

"Partly," he said mildly. "You see the canine tooth, being as prominent as in this case, is very characteristic of the adrenal-centered type of individual. And our qualitative analyses of the saliva solution bear this out."

He nibbled his toast as though he had said enough.

"And what is an 'adrenal-centered type'?" his wife asked, somewhat meekly.

"The adrenals are of the important family of glands," Professor Goldie dropped unconsciously into his lecture monotone. "They determined the vigor of certain growths in the body, the size of bones and the like. In individuals in whom the adrenals are most vigorous the canines are especially long, the head is round, the chest is broad, as are the cheeks—in short, every one of the features indicated in the sketches Professor Enghart was good enough to draw for me is based on the most firmly established findings in this field."

His wife studied the sketches, still incredulous.

"Assuming that the portrait is a good one," she asked, "what is your next step with it?"

Her husband put down his napkin. There was a furtive relief in his tone as he said:

"I am afraid, my dear, that I have come to the end of my investigation on the basis of what data I have. I haven't the slightest notion what to do next. I told you, Grace, I wasn't fitted for this work."

Mrs. Goldie dished out an extra large portion of chocolate pudding—a weakness for which her husband had never outgrown—and passed it to him.

"You're fitted for any kind of work that takes brains, Harry," she said, passing the plate to him. "You will have a chance to use them on those silly little redheaded ants for the next few days. Because I shall be too busy myself to bother you, dear, with police work—for a while at least."

Chief Quinn looked up hopefully when Mrs. Goldie came to see him the following afternoon.

"Any news for me, Mrs. Goldie?" he asked respectfully.

"Nothing but questions to ask you," she said briskly. "And a request to make. May I see the victim's clothing and the contents of his pockets?"

"Certainly. But aside from the little money we found in his pockets and a handkerchief—unmarked—we got nothing to go on."

He brought out the clothes of the dead man. Mrs. Goldie looked only at the buttons.

"Just as I thought," she said. "A bachelor. Look at the fool man's way in which he sewed this button and that—did it himself. No woman would make such a poor job of it."

She looked at the handkerchief. "New. Hasn't been washed yet. And good linen. What's a laborer—if he was one—want linen handkerchiefs for? And it's one of those that come in sealed packages for fastidious persons. I know the kind. I buy them for my husband.

"Chief Quinn, he wasn't an unskilled laborer, but an engraver. My husband determined that. But when I went to Eureka Engraving Company this morning—they're the only firm of their kind in Meig's City—to see if any of their workers turned up missing, they said no. But I found out also that if any engraver wanted work in this town he could have it. This man could have had it. He didn't have to work at anything coarser than engraving.

"I don't like the looks of it. Chief Quinn, if a man is a skilled engraver, why should he work at anything coarser? Why would he want to hide the fact that he's an engraver?"

Chief Quinn dizzily tried to follow the leaps of Mrs. Goldie's intuition over ground where masculine logic would have crawled cautiously.

"Why, an engraver would feel shy about advertising himself as such if he was engraving something he had no business to be engraving—like dies for counterfeiting," he suggested.

"Counterfeiting?" Her face lit up. "Just the thing! Chief Quinn, I have read that you police people keep what is known as a 'Rascals' Gallery.' May I look at your collection of counterfeiting rascals?"

Chief Quinn gave it up. One might as well try to follow the leaps of a flea as the processes of this woman's mind.

"We have a Rogues' Gallery of a sort, Mrs. Goldie," he said meekly. "Not much of a one. The department is only ten years old, you know. But counterfeiting is a federal business, and it's the Department of Justice at Washington that would have a anything else I can do for you?"

"Yes." She took up her handbag and rose. "You might telegraph the Department of Justice at Washington to let me look at their collection of nasty counterfeiters when I get there Wednesday morning. And good afternoon!"

Chief Quinn's bewilderment and amusement at Mrs. Goldie's assurance coupled with her naïveté in police work—which, however, had a certain freshness of method in its attack—communicated itself three days later to a certain branch of the Department of Justice at Washington when Mrs. Goldie arrived there. They had received word from Chief Quinn she was coming and thought they were ready for her.

Things went smoothly enough at first. She asked to be allowed an inspection of their gallery of counterfeiters, and on Chief Quinn's telephonic assurance that he would vouch for her social standing and mission, she was given that permission.

For half a day she looked at hundreds of photographs, comparing them with some water color portraits she had brought with her. For half a day her doubt of the reality of the portraits her husband had evolved increased. Then, just as she had turned one of the last pages of a heavy folio, a flush of excitement tinged her face. It was then too that trouble for both herself and the Department of Justice started.

"Who is this man—" She pointed to a photograph. "And where can I find him?"

There followed a searching of records. The answer that came back half an hour later was:

"You can find him in Atlanta prison, where he's serving a five year stretch for counterfeiting. Convicted a month ago."

A discouraged look came into her face, but it did not stay there.

"Please let me have all the information on the case available," she demanded.

There followed another searching and fetching and carrying of records. After Mrs. Goldie had gone over the court record of the trial and conviction of Sam Redfield, alias "Two-spot" Sam, her excitement mounted.

"Has this person any brothers?" she next demanded.

More searching of records and mounting excitement on the part of Mrs. Goldie followed. That afternoon calm reigned again in the record department of the Department of Justice.

Mrs. Goldie had departed by trolley for Baltimore.

"Bull" Redfield, freshly shaved and haircut, emerged from a barber's shop in Baltimore's foremost sporting hotel and stopped at the cigar counter. With a connoisseur's sure judgment he chose several of the best of a box of black Havana cigars, paid for them, bit off the tip from one, and lighting the cigar, slouched into a leather chair to enjoy his smoke.

He enjoyed it not only as a cigar but as his first chance for days for a leisurely smoke. He had traveled considerably and been more or less under a nervous strain. But the occasion for both seemed to be over and the cigar tasted even better than he expected.

As Bull smoked his brown, shifty eyes half closed against the blue smoke. Only a part of his habitually watchful self was on guard against unpleasant surprises. The rest of him was lulled with the sense of a ticklish job well done and on the way to be well forgotten.

It took him some time to smoke his cigar down to its last enjoyable inch. Then

he threw the butt negligently in the direction of the nearest brass limbo for such things, but missed it by a quarter of an inch. That did not disturb him as half a dozen other similar failures by others were indicated by cigar butts and cigarette ends.

Bull had just put the match to another cigar when his hand suddenly stopped midway in the action of throwing away the match. For a most remarkable spectacle developed. A rather primly dressed, middle-aged woman of undoubted refinement of person, manner, and dress had risen from a near-by chair and was striding toward where the discarded cigar butt lay on the floor, a little apart from the others.

As she approached it she took out a hat-pin and speared Bull's cigar butt with it. His astonishment and amusement at the strange proceeding was reflected in the faces of several other gentlemen of undoubted sporting proclivities near by who witnessed the scene.

Bull had always prided himself on his ready wit. Winking at the others, he rose and approached the surprising woman. She was carefully—most carefully—placing the cigar butt in a box of cardboard she seemed to have brought along. Bowing with exaggerated gallantry, he took a whole cigar from his vest pocket and held it out to her.

" Here, lady, never say I ain't given you anything!" he said gravely.

At the guffaw of laughter that sounded Bull winked again.

Then his expression changed. For the surprising woman chose to take high offense.

" How dare you speak to me!" she cried shrilly. " How dare you ridicule me before all these men! Who gave you permission to address me at all?"

Her outbreak attracted the attention of several husky men who hurried over.

" Lady, I'm a plain-clothes man," said one of them, edging up to Bull, whose face suddenly grew sharp with tension. " What's he done to you?"

" He insulted me!" she cried. " And I insist on his arrest!"

" All right, mister, you'll have to come along then!" the plain-clothes man said, laying his hand on Bull's arm.

For an instant Bull's eyes blazed with lightning debate with himself. Then seeing the queer woman's persisting indignation, he grinned, shrugged his shoulders, and said:

" Oh, all right, I'll go. They can't hang a man for this!"

But they did.

For at Bull Redfield's trial it was proved that he had followed, shot, and killed " Slim " Belford, whose testimony when he turned State's witness against his gang of fellow counterfeiters, had sent Bull's brother Sam to Atlanta prison.

And the bit of evidence that connected him with the murder of " Slim " Belford in Meig's City was a bitten cigar end. For it corresponded perfectly to the cast of the teeth marks about a cigar butt found in Drake's Alley in Meig's City near " Slim " Belford's body.

THE END

10 A

"My real trouble was chronic constipation, which had caused pimples, acne and frequent headaches . . . Skeptical, I began to eat Fleischmann's Yeast. Then—after a little over a month—the miracle became an established fact: pimples gone, headaches gone, acne fast going, and no more constipation."
E. H. Howard, Santa Fe, N. M.

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For a few cents a day thousands have found again the freshness, the vigor of youth

NOT a "cure-all," not a medicine in any sense —Fleischmann's Yeast is simply a remarkable fresh food.

The millions of tiny active yeast plants in every cake invigorate the whole system. They aid digestion—clear the skin—banish the poisons of constipation. Where cathartics give only temporary relief, yeast strengthens the intestinal muscles and makes them healthy and active. And day by day it releases new stores of energy . . . Eat two or three cakes a day before meals: on crackers—in fruit juices or milk—or just plain. *For constipation especially, dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) night and morning.* Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days. All grocers have Fleischmann's Yeast. Start eating it today!

And let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Health Research Dept. Z-15, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.

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Dreamer of Dreams — *Honest and Truly*
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Here they are! The 16 song and dance successes of the hour! All New York is humming, whistling and dancing to these pieces. We offer you—*all 16 of them*—for only $2.98 on *eight 10-inch, double-faced guaranteed records*. Play them on *any* phonograph. Each record beautifully rendered by famous orchestras.

Send No Money! Just send coupon or post card. Play these records for 10 days in your own home. See how wonderful they are. Note clearness, beauty and volume of tone. Only give postman $2.98 plus a few cents delivery charges. If not entirely pleased, return records and we'll refund money and pay postage BOTH WAYS without question. Low price is possible by manufacturing *in sets* and selling direct to thousands of users. Don't wait. Mail coupon below or postal.

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Send me on 10 days trial, your 16 Fox Trots, Songs and Waltzes on 8 double-face, 10-inch records, guaranteed equal or better than any records made. I will pay postman only $2.98, plus delivery charges on arrival. However, this is not a purchase. If records don't entirely please me, I will return them within 10 days and you will refund my money without question.

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Lady's wide top solitaire. Latest Style 18 K. white gold hand engraved and pierced ring gives the blue white, perfect cut diamond extra brilliance and large appearance. Regular price $85—special bargain price only $62.50

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BE COMFORTABLE—Wear the Brooks Appliance, the modern scientific invention which gives rupture sufferers immediate relief. It has no obnoxious springs or pads. Automatic Air Cushions bind and draw together the broken parts. No salves or plasters. Durable. Cheap. Sent on trial to prove its worth. Beware of imitations. Look for trade-mark bearing portrait and signature of C. E. Brooks which appears on every Appliance. None other genuine. Full information and booklet sent free in plain, sealed envelope.

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I make myself hear, after being deaf for 25 years, with my Artificial Ear Drums. I wear them day and night. They are perfectly comfortable. No one sees them. They stop head-noises. Write me and I will tell you a true story, how I became deaf and how I make you hear. Address

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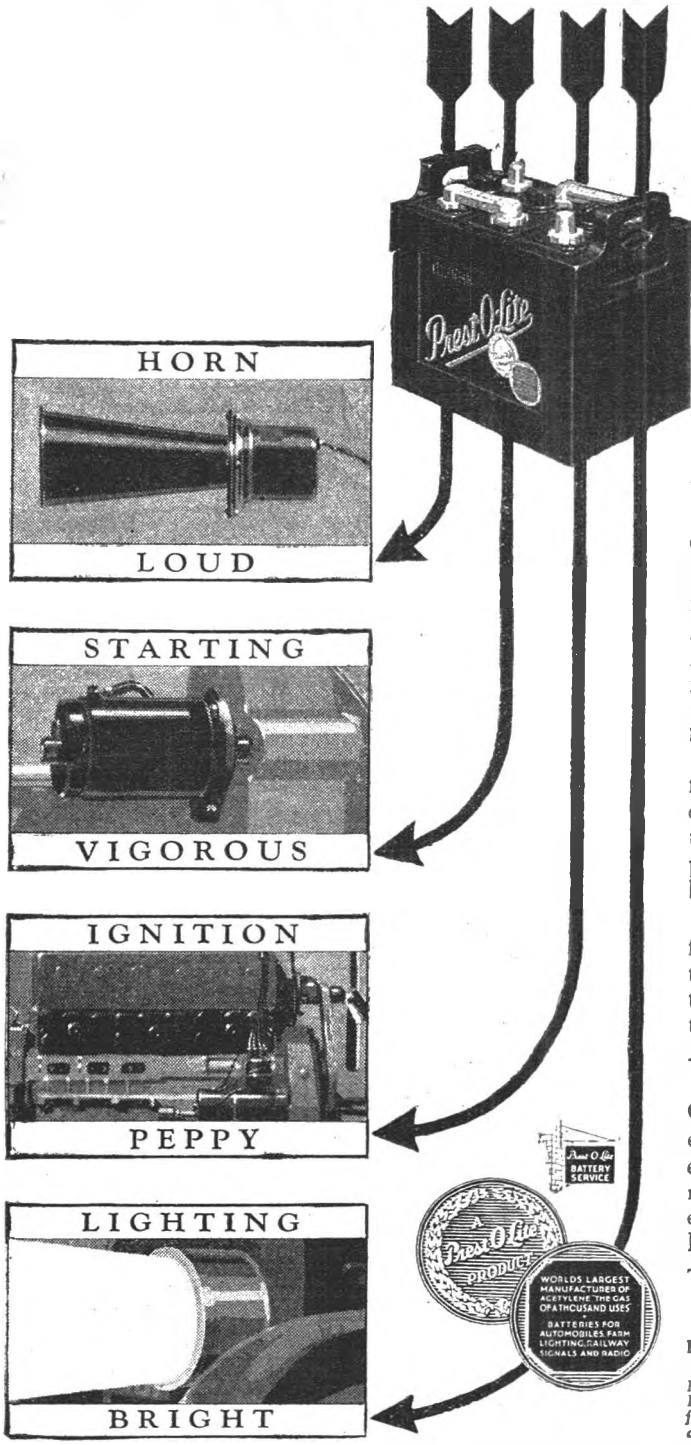

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$20 a Week Clerk *now* Auditor at $25 a Day

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A WEEK

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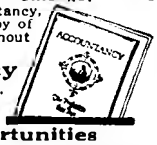

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Special Sizes for Bunions, Callouses, Blisters and Tender Spots.

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Write name on Coupon and send TODAY.

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Return mail will bring Free Trial Plapao.....

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Thousands of Remarkable Cases

An old lady, 72 years of age, who suffered for many years and was absolutely helpless found relief. A man who was helpless, unable to rise from his chair, was riding horseback and playing tennis within a year. A little child, paralyzed, was playing about the house after wearing a Philo Burt Appliance three weeks. We have successfully treated more than 60,000 cases the past 23 years.

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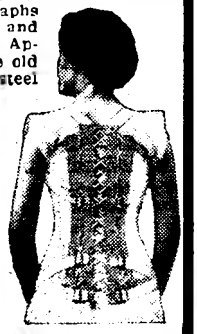

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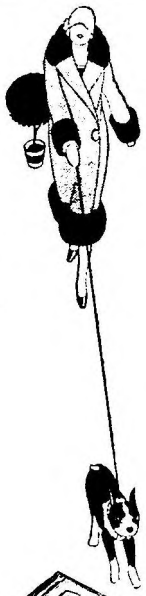

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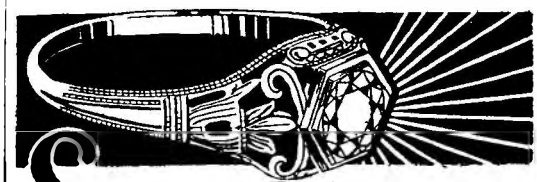

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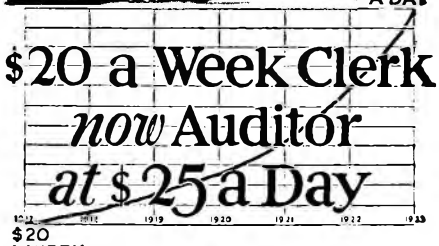

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☐ Modern Foremanship and Production Methods
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☐ Business English
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☐ Effective Speaking
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In one minute—just that quick—the pain is gone. No treatment so safe, sure, healing, thoroughly antiseptic and scientific in every way as Dr. Scholl's Zino-pads. The results are a revelation. At your druggist's or shoe dealer's. Cost but a trifle.

For Bunions

Special Sizes for Bunions, Callouses, Blisters and Tender Spots.

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Try this treatment. See how instantly it stops pain, soreness, irritation and soothes and heals the deeper tissues.

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New invention now makes ironing easy in every home. Ends hot stove drudgery. Cuts ironing time in half. Saves steps. Costs one cent for 3 hours use. No attachments. No cords. No tubes. Gives quick regulated heat. Guaranteed. Sells fast. Mrs. Wagner, Ohio, sold 24 in few hours spare time. Moyer, Pennsylvania, made $164 in one week. You can do as well. Work all or spare time. No experience needed. No capital. New plan. Simply take orders. We deliver and collect. Commissions paid same day you take orders. Send for exclusive territory and FREE OUTFIT OFFER. Write today.

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Agents Wanted
The Perfect Writing Instrument
Writes with ink easy as a lead pencil. Won't skip, blot, scratch, leak or soil hands. Its steady uniform flow of ink improves handwriting.
$1.50
Makes three carbon copies with original in ink. Guaranteed—Send No Money.
Pay postman $1.50 plus postage.
INKOGRAPH, CO., Inc.
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A hard, round, smooth ball-like 14-kt. Gold Point.

New writer wins $1000 prize

THE $1000 prize offered by the Mission Film Corporation for the best screen story based on the title, "The Sunshine of Paradise Alley," has just been awarded to Otto E. A. Schmidt, of San Francisco.

Mr. Schmidt's story was chosen because of its high rating in dramatic strength, entertainment value and picturable action—a tribute to the character of the training he received from the Palmer Institute of Authorship.

Scores of other students of the Palmer Institute are also selling short stories, novels, plays, special articles and photoplays.

The list includes Anita Pettibone, whose novel, "The Bitter Country," was recently published by Doubleday, Page & Co.; Phyllis Cumberland, who sold "Tangled Lives" to Thomas H. Ince; Miss Bernadine King, who wrote "What Did the Bishop Say?"; John M. Byers, who sold his first play to a New York Producer; Charles Shepherd, who wrote "The Ways of Ah Sin"; Tadema Bussiere, whose play, "The Open Gate," was given its premiere at the Morosco Theater, Los Angeles, in October, 1924; Jane Hurrle, who wrote "Robes of Redemption"; Paul Schofield, who produced "Through the Dark," and Miss Winifred Kimball, who won the $10,000 prize in the scenario contest conducted by the *Chicago Daily News*.

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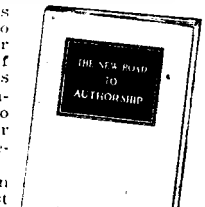

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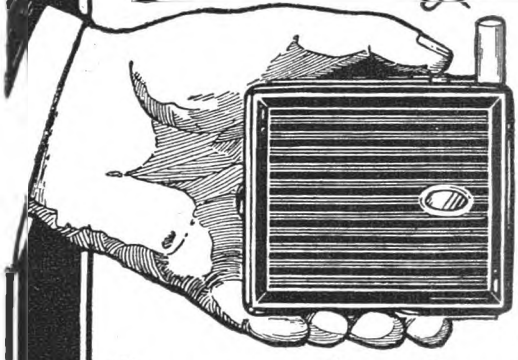

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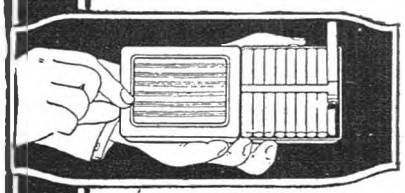

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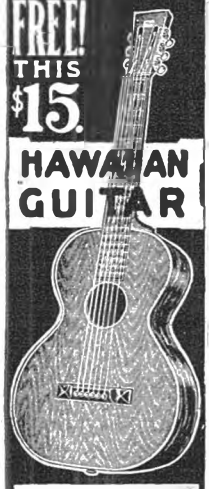

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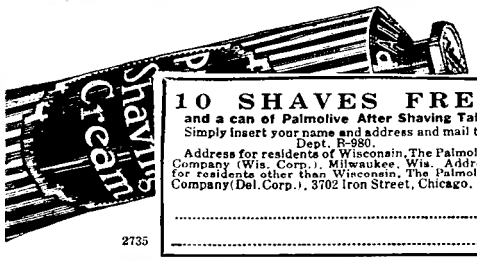

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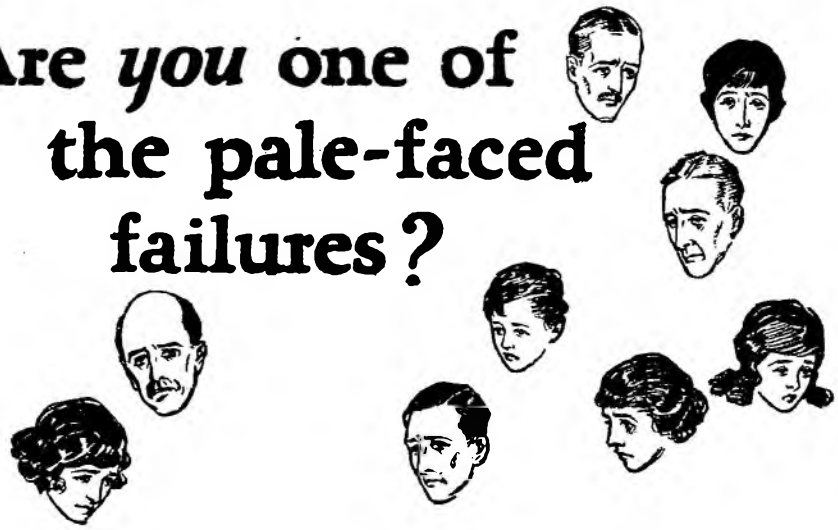

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Press the thumbnail. Watch the time it takes for blood to return. Anemia is indicated unless blood returns at once.

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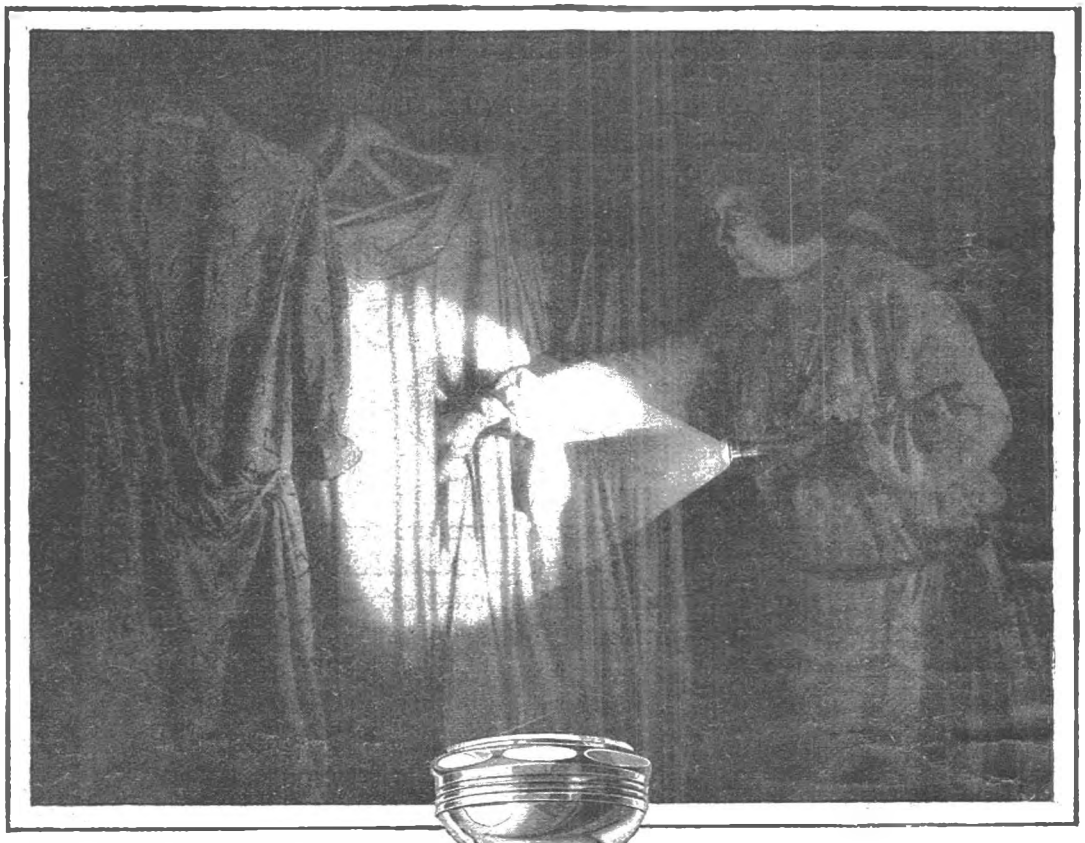

DON'T grope in dark closets. Use your flashlight! To rummage in dark or dim-lighted places, use your flashlight! You can plunge a lighted Eveready into the most inflammable materials with perfect safety. Bright light, right where you want it. Safe light, wherever you need it. Keep an Eveready where you can get your hands on it instantly for those countless uses after dark. Improved models meet every need for light —indoors and out. There is a type for every purpose and purse. New features. New designs. New reasons for owning this safe, handy light.

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